

"I OPEN AND CLOSE":  
THE I IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S DRAMA

By  
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Using primarily Heinz Lichtenstein, D. W. Winnicott, and Norman Holland for psychoanalytic support, I explore identity in Samuel Beckett's drama. I combine the elements of repetition and contradiction with the relationships of his characters in order to assert that Beckett's characters proclaim their identities through their interaction with the external world, the world of the not me, and also that thematically his characters reveal the necessity for relatedness between the me and not me in order to achieve a satisfactory sense of self. Beckett's characters do not question that they exist (they either do or do not have a sense of existence). Their relatedness, or lack of relatedness, however, raises the question of how to exist, how to strike a balance between the me and not me (between separateness and relatedness), how to live in some kind of harmony with the dilemma of human identity. This suggestion

for how to exist is, for me, the positive aspect of Beckett's work that hovers on the periphery of his often bleak plays, a revelation of simplicity, our need for interdependence.

In my first chapter, I outline the framework for a discussion of identity by discussing the repetition, contradiction, and relationships evident in Beckett's stage plays. I conclude by determining that, for me, the silence that Beckett often seems to be leaning towards is thematically twofold: the negative silence of total withdrawal from the world posits the positive silence of personal thought. I proceed in the second chapter to choose one character from each of Beckett's radio plays in order to represent identity themes. In my final chapter, I consider each of the television plays separately, in the light of current psychoanalytic theory and my own insights gleaned from working on a production of these plays.

By separating Beckett's dramatic works into stage, radio, and television plays and working chronologically within each medium, I find an increasing emphasis on dialogue, on speaking and, not necessarily in the same plays, on listening as it represents the crucial first phase of our response to the world.

## INTRODUCTION

### "I OPEN."

"Do not imagine, because I am silent, that I am not present, and alive, to all that is going on." These lines are Maddy's emphatic response when she feels ignored by other characters in Samuel Beckett's radio play All That Fall (61). The lines reveal how Beckett turns one voice into a chorus. For one voice these lines are literal, Maddy's way of calling attention to her presence by shunning the notion that she is not. In another voice these lines are highly metadramatic, that is, they call our attention to the fact that Maddy who has not spoken for the last few minutes, a circumstance that quickly establishes absence in radio drama, is reminding us that she is still very much here. In yet another voice Maddy calls our attention to existence itself, at least to her sense of existence. Perhaps this blend of voices is what confuses Beckett's audiences; we try to compress his dialogue into the sound of one voice when we can, instead, simply allow the ambiguity, the absurdity, to wash over us and pull out of it what we will. I choose to isolate the third voice, the voice of existence, and I suggest that the sense of existence evoked by this voice coincides with the sense of existence of many

of Beckett's dramatic characters and by implication many of the people in Beckett's audiences who see their own lives intertwine with the characters on Beckett's stages. Not only does the audience not know if Maddy is there when she is silent but she is not sure either. Maddy does not want to be merely a presence but to feel alive, quickened, to be part of the interactions among living others. Thus, Maddy only feels "alive," sure of her own existence when reaching out to others with her voice(s), by maintaining the dialogue.

Reaching out to others with his voice(s), maintaining the dialogue, is an apt description of what Samuel Beckett has been doing with his drama since he wrote his first two plays between 1947 and 1949: Eleutheria, shelved by Beckett and never produced, and Waiting for Godot, first produced in Paris on January 5, 1953. The reaction to Godot was immediate and intense. The first published review was written by Sylvain Zegel. After proclaiming that it is a rare treat to discover a new author who "deserves comparison with the greatest," Zegel states his conviction that "Waiting for Godot . . . will be spoken of for a long time" (11). He then attempts to explain why some people won't like it. They can't "summarize the play" because nothing happens; they are, perhaps, unable to see "that they were watching their own lives" and not theatrical wizardry (11). Possibly, they will be unable to hear that the voices are typical of what they hear everyday or realize that the

tramps encompass all of the contradictions and misunderstandings that we encounter and create each day of our lives (12). Zegel does not try to unscramble the mystery of Godot; he merely suggests that Godot is an "unattainable quest" which people "wait for and which gives them the strength to live on" (12). With these few words, Zegel became the first of many who to this day, thirty-seven years later, are still poking and prodding at Godot, seeking a thread of enlightenment, seeking to unravel the intricate woven fabric of Beckett's first great success.

Everyone, however, did not share Zegel's enthusiasm, and saw instead only confusion in the contradictions. After seeing an American production in 1955, Marya Mannes wrote, "I doubt whether I have seen a worse play. I mention it only as typical of the self-delusion of which certain intellectuals are capable, embracing obscurity, pretense, ugliness, and negation as protective coloring for their own confusions" (30). Mannes is possibly an American version of the audience members who author and dramatic scholar Martin Esslin refers to when he notes that Godot "produced near riots among a good many highly sophisticated audiences in Western Europe (Theatre 1). People are not always happy with change, to say the least. Still, Beckett, who had already achieved a certain success with his prose, was destined to charm or at least disarm viewers, reviewers, theorists and critics all over the world within a relatively short period of time. I might be able to find some serious

Beckett "critics" among my students but even most of them jump on the wagon when they begin to see their own concerns about life being echoed by his texts: their own uncertainties about stability, their own fears about relationships, their own often contradictory views of the world around them, a world filled with an absurdity that they feel is inherent in their lives and an absurdity that they often feel "adults" do not understand.

The word absurd was first used to describe the work of Beckett and some of his contemporaries by Esslin in his classic work The Theatre of the Absurd in 1961. The notion of absurdity has been used and misused often since that time. Beckett is absurd, but not absurd in the modern connotation of ridiculous, not worth noting, but an earlier denotation of "'out of harmony'" (Theatre 5). Previously used in a musical sense, out of harmony is, Esslin suggests, the use meant by Camus and Kafka. Beckett's work is absurd because it displays, like existentialism, a "sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity [lack of harmony] of the human condition" (5). Beckett's absurdity, like that of Adamov, Ionesco, and Genet, reaches beyond that espoused by the existentialists who presented their theories, however absurd, couched in "highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning" (6). The dramatic Absurdists go one step further by "trying to achieve a unity between [the] basic assumptions [of absurdism] and the form in which these are expressed" (6). Beckett sets upon the stage a scraggly tree

and a low mound around which the absurd play of Didi, Gogo, Pozzo and Lucky occur. Ionesco offers two elderly people, struggling to communicate, amidst a host of empty chairs. Genet sets a tale of shifting identities in the shifting decor of bordello rooms. The dramatic Absurdist strive to integrate their subject matter with their form by making the structure of their plays as absurd, in terms of the traditional theater, as their content (Esslin, Theatre 6).

By defining the Theatre of the Absurd as "part of the 'anti-literary movement'" (7), as leaning toward the "violent and grotesque" (7), and as not arguing "about the absurdity" but "merely present[ing] [his emphasis] it" (6), Esslin's work set the stage for many theorists to come: "the certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away . . . they have been tested and found wanting . . . they have been discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions" (4-5). Beckett does not present plays that assume to know the answers. Literary historian Hugh Kenner explains, "We are not . . . like dogs excited by the scent of invisible meat, to snap after some item of information which the author grasps very well and is holding just behind the curtains" (10). An art that does not pretend to know the answers was in itself an anomaly at this time. Richard Coe calls it "the art of failure" (5), "art [that] is the elucidation of the impossible" (4). If art is an attempt to recreate the world then it is doomed to failure, for the world is full of failure. Words,

themselves, are "the chief ingredient of the art of failure: they form that impenetrable barrier of language which forever keeps us from knowing who we are, what we are" (Coe 11). Coe outlines the themes that he sees as pervading Beckett's art:

the discontinuity of personality, the failure of love and friendship, the failure of communication, the necessary solitude of the artist, the belief that suffering is the one force powerful enough to establish, even in the teeth of Time, the identity of Self. (18)

Jan Bruck elaborates, noting that

although [Beckett] recognizes the protective function of consciousness and voluntary memory, he regards the loss of involuntary memory and the concurrent atrophy of experience, which has rendered the story . . . a useless instrument of communication, as the sign of a fundamental inability of the modern artist to communicate, as the virtual end of communication.

(168)

When I first began reading the Beckett critics I was struck by the negativity, weighed down by it actually. I also found, however, that there are critics, the preceding critics not excluded, who look beyond the negative, albeit including it, and see at least a glimmer of something positive in Beckett's work. Jack MacGowran, an actor who worked in many Beckett productions and for whom Beckett wrote Eh Joe, says that Beckett "writes about human distress, not human despair" (Toscan 215); "there is an underlying simplicity" (Toscan 214). MacGowran also notes that Didi and Gogo, despite the seeming uselessness of their existence "are interdependent; one needs the other" (Toscan



216) and one has the other. He tells us that Beckett's own interpretation of Endgame was that the play was about "interdependence--that man must depend upon his fellowman in some way no matter how awful" (Toscan 218). Director Herbert Blau suggests: "As for the despair that is the 'objective content' of Beckett's plays, he has given the best answer to that: If it were all dark, everything would be easy, but there is light, too" ("Notes" 256). Director and drama scholar Sidney Homan says, "Beckett's theaters, I believe, are . . . affirmative, however gray the landscape pictured there. If there is only a solitary tree in Waiting for Godot, there is [his emphasis] a tree nevertheless" (Theaters 205). Theatrical historian Katherine Worth suggests that "in each [of Beckett's later plays] there is a strong sense of something forming, flowering into shape, something never perceived till now or only just becoming attainable" (Irish 262). Paul Grawe states that Godot is comedy because its "basic message is that the human race will survive, that it is destined to carry on" (17). Grawe punctuates this assertion, however, by suggesting that Beckett, probably "appalled by the positive emotional meanings audiences were taking from performances of Godot," wrote Endgame in which there is "left no possibility for an assertive or optimistic response" (245).

Thus, when it comes to Beckett's work, there is little consensus. I find that critics often, necessarily, replicate Beckettian absurdity with its inherent

contradictions in their own discussions of Beckett. Beckett scholar Ruby Cohn says in Just Play that

Beckett's plays are nourished on fundamental tensions--words wrung from silence, words belied by gestures, gestures wrested from inertia, darkness invaded by light, hope betrayed by habit, passion eroded by compassion, mind divorced from feeling, mismatched couples straining to part.  
(12)

Tension presumes contradiction: words from silence, gestures from inertia, light and dark, couples mismatched, but couples nonetheless. Thus, if we accept that we live in the midst of absurdity and contradiction, Beckett's work is truly a realistic recreation of our world. Yet Enoch Brater says that in Beckett's drama, "objects, motivations, exposition, and even explanation, the paraphernalia of the realistic theater, have been cancelled and omitted. What remains is an immense--we are tempted to say infinite--landscape of potentiality" ("Footnote" 40). Modern drama critic Andrew Kennedy concurs, noting that Beckett is "the leading non-realist Western writer of the second half of our century" (1). Within that infinite potentiality that is Beckett's stage, however, others see a dyed-in-the-wool realist at work. Theatrical scholar Bernard Beckerman notes that "it is by being fantastically literal that Beckett's images produce so insistent a visual effect" (150). MacGowran adds, Beckett is "the greatest realist I know of in this generation. He's an extreme realist" (Toscan 222). Beckett "talks of the human condition as it is" (Toscan 222).

The contradictions concerning whether Beckett is or is not a realist can, to an extent, be resolved by considering the use of the words realist and realistic in context. When Brater and Kennedy assert that Beckett is not realistic, I suggest they mean in a literary sense; Beckett does not belong to the realistic dramatic movement of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. His stages do not resemble the drawing rooms of Ibsen, Chekhov, or Shaw. His characters' dialogues do not echo Pinero or Galsworthy. In literary jargon, Beckett is not a realist. But neither does Beckett's drama resemble the non-realistic, dream plays of expressionism's predecessor, Strindberg, or the brash spectacle of Artaud. In this sense Beckett is not a product of the non-realistic movements of expressionism/surrealism or the avant-garde theaters of the early 20th Century. Thus, I suggest that when Beckerman and MacGowran call Beckett a realist, it is not in the context of staging or even general content but in the context of characters. When Maddy says, "Do not imagine, because I am silent, that I am not present, and alive, to all that is going on" (ATF 61), or when Gogo explains to Didi why he should hang himself first, "Gogo light--bough not break--Gogo dead. Didi heavy--bough break--Didi alone" (WFG 12), Beckett eschews the world of dreams, the world of abstractions, for a tersely literal world, a world of physical fact, of life and death, of aloneness, the world we all inhabit. Winnie sighs, upon realizing that she will not literally be pulled "up into the

blue": "Ah well, natural laws, natural laws, I suppose it's like everything else, it all depends on the creature you happen to be" (HD 34). In this sense, then, Beckett is a realist. He strips his characters of facade, reveals what type of creatures they are, and leaves them to deal with what is left: a world of physical fact and minds with little foundation in such a world. Brater avers that "far from distancing us, Beckett has his eyes on us, carefully drawing us into the action and making us the protagonists" (Beyond 79). Further, Beckermann suggests that people often see themselves in Beckett's characters: "People do listen to themselves on tape recorders; husbands do read newspapers rather than listen to their wives' prattle" (151).

Characters not being heard or listened to on Beckett's stages does pull at the audiences' experience of daily life. Robert Torrance notes, "If Beckett's is a world of flitting dreams, yet it is a world such as most of us doubtless inhabit all our days without ever coming to know it" (95). Yet if Beckett is so clearly revealing us on stage, why does Gabor Mihalyi write that "throughout the performance [of a Beckett play], the spectator watches 'from without' he finds no opportunity of identifying himself with the characters of the play or living through their tragedy as if it were his own" (281). Perhaps, we can, are able to, relate to Beckett's characters but often we are unable to because we don't know enough, realize enough, about our own lives.

Whatever the conclusions we may draw about the verisimilitude of Beckett's work, it seems clear that they "repay careful and repeated reading" (Barnard xi) because they are in some way "concerned with the old problems of time and eternity, of human suffering, and the purpose and nature of the real self within" (Barnard xi). "Beckett does not provide one [an answer to the question of the nature of the real self], but he does present the questions"; he "enlarges our awareness" (Barnard xi). These words by G. C. Barnard coupled with the opening lines I cited by Maddy have led me into a search for the self that Beckett does portray. Homan suggests that Beckett's aesthetic principles include

the goal of self-knowledge coupled with the powerful qualification that such self-knowledge may be nothing more than a self-portrait, with all the fraudulence, both actual and psychological, implied by the word portrait [his emphasis].  
(Theaters 9)

Cohn speaks of Beckett as wishing "not merely to reduce but to concentrate to the lowest common human denominator" (Play 14). When speaking of Godot, Jacques Guicharnaud offers the following:

The tramp represents man as such, detached from society. He is in some ways the symbol of the inalienable part of every man, the irreducible element that transcends particularities and remains aloof from social, political, civic or ideological brigades.

(109)

S. E. Gontarski echoes Guicharnaud: "Beckett's thematic commitment is to the fundamental questions of reality, being, and knowing, to universal images of man's

predicament, and not overtly with their social manifestations or their rational explanations" ("Intent" 244-5). What is the self-portrait, however fraudulent, in Beckett's work? What is the lowest common denominator, the irreducible element? What is the question of being that stalks Beckett's stages? I will suggest that the answer to these questions is human identity, the core identity in each of us to which Kenner refers when he suggests that Beckett offers in his work "a voice reaching out of the interiority of a human person, with the thrust of my utter uniqueness, expressing, pressing out, so much as may be, toward some other person that sense of 'I' which I alone have" (183). I am reminded of Gerard Manley Hopkins' theory, gleaned from Duns Scotus, of inscape and instress. Inscape is "the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity. This identity is not static but dynamic" (Abrams et al. 1580). Instress is what we do when we reach out, with our inscape, in an attempt to envelop the external and determine its design (1580). Our identity reaches out through the space between ourselves and others in an attempt to touch, to know, that uniqueness that is an other and at the same time reveals, pushes out, our own uniqueness.

While assuming Beckett's uniqueness, many critics have investigated Beckett through the philosophic influences they see revealed in his work. The very nature of philosophy presumes, correctly, that in some sense these works discuss the nature of existence. In his discussion of Beckett's

aesthetics, Homan briefly discusses the influence on Beckett of existentialism, and such people as Descartes, Vico, Geulincx, Malebranche, Bishop Berkeley, and Schopenhauer (11). Theodor Adorno adds the expressionists to this list (119). Rolf Breuer studies Beckett in light of the concepts of Bertrand Russell, Alfred Tarski, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Linda Ben-Zvi studies Beckett using the theories of Fritz Mauthner ("Samuel Beckett" 193). Also, many writers mention the influence of Proust on Beckett, based largely on Beckett's early work on Proust. All of the works that attempt to elucidate the many influences on Beckett's canon are valid and insightful, but I want to narrow the definition of identity, look for it within the texts themselves and in the characters who inhabit those texts.

Tracing identity as a theme in modern literature from the Romantics, Robert Langbaum best summarizes his theory concerning Beckett and identity by the name he gives this chapter, "Beckett: Zero Identity" (120). If Eliot was concerned with the fall of civilization, Beckett is concerned with life after the fall (4-5): "Time moves cyclically, as we see by the repetitions [in Beckett's plays]; but because memory fails, the cycles cannot be perceived" (124). Beckett's "characters are symbolic only negatively, since they symbolize the lack [his emphasis] of life" (127). "Identity in Beckett approaches zero, with the difference between life and death almost imperceptible" (128). Langbaum ends his discussion of identity by asking

"can literature do anything about [the problem of identity], can the best writing in the world make us restructure our identity?" (143)

I will suggest answers to these questions. First, literature cannot do anything about the problems of identity. Yet I believe that the best writing can suggest what is at the core of man's identity, can encourage us to reflect on what is left to us as our institutions fall, as our social systems fail, and as we become aware of the terrible chasm between the words we speak and the meaning we wish to convey. What is left to us is worth investigating. Instead of simply wailing about loss (loss that is certainly apparent in Beckett's work), I suggest that Beckett also confronts us with what is left and challenges us to work with it, to accept the vagaries, the inconsistencies, the contradictions that at times become the focal points of our existence and move on, continue, with what we do have, our basic need to be individuals and yet to be at one with others. I suggest that Beckett's characters are symbolic in a positive sense because by often presenting us with their own lack of life, they warn us about our own. So I will seek out what Robert Kantra suggests is the "psychological validity" (733) operating within the plays.

I must add that during my sojourn into the work of Beckett one concept has become abundantly clear. Beckett's work is not to be trifled with. "Beckett has possessed from the start a temperament deeply suspicious of system-



building, whether in philosophy or religion or literature" (Knowlson and Pilling 241). Beckett's work invites speculation, invites interpretation, and I insist, offers these to each of us as individuals but does not invite pat answers. I recall that Kenner opens Samuel Beckett with this disclaimer: "This book [is] meant not to explain Samuel Beckett's work but to help the reader think about it" (9). Beckett denies "the presence in his work of some hidden plan or key" (9). David Hesla discusses the difficulty of interpreting Beckett's plays, noting

one of the important reasons for the difficulty is that the antecedents and the consequences of what is happening on stage are obscure. We do not know very much about the characters' past, and can only speculate on what their future will be. (145)

Theorist Ihab Hassan adds that Beckett's "sentences end by denying the assertions with which they began. Questions receive further questions for an answer. Misunderstandings, contradictions, repetitions, and tautologies abound" (206). These very repetitions and contradictions and misunderstandings are the stuff of my analysis of Beckett and identity. I hope to, like Kenner, help others think about Beckett's work. I do not have the answers but I will suggest a view, a system of sorts, that can be incorporated or not, one that can help but not hinder. I would like my work to provoke thought and, even better, discussion. For I know that my study of Beckett has, in a sense, left me "only [myself], disturbed but obscurely appeased, and the scholar vagrant, comedian of the impasse, aloof, unassimilable, shy"

(Kenner 207). Finally, I submit Hesla's apt description of what Beckett might say, and surely has, when pressed to create a dialectic, to mend the contradictions that abound in his works, to support a scholar's hard-won conclusions: "We seem to hear Beckett's voice, someone's voice speaking through Beckett, and what it says is, 'Perhaps'" (230).

### Methodology

Choosing a specific critical stance in relation to Beckett's work, in relation to any texts, is not an easy task. For me, after surveying several different critical theories, making this choice was comparable to my choosing a new way of thinking, a new way of processing information. I did, however, know that identity was to be my topic. Fortunately, I found that psychoanalytic theory, rather than forcing me into a new method of processing information, taught me what my method of processing is and how to open out from there to new, broader plains of interpretation. Psychoanalytic theory helped me in the struggle to know myself, to know my own identity, through understanding my own unique way of being and my own interpretations of texts. I learned, for example, that my identity, my way of processing information, primarily concerns fusion and merger. I tend to put things together: people, places, ideas, etc. Give me two opposites and will weave a middle ground, create a matrix. I also learned, however, not to find a middle ground in a text when it was not there, not to

disallow the contradictions that I am now convinced are an integral part of human existence. I learned that I often forced texts to do something that I could only prove emotionally, not textually. Thus, I became careful at least to try, when I felt the situation called for it, to separate my intellectual response from my emotional response. I found, at last, that I could discuss separatist, assertive, even aggressive issues in a text and not feel uncomfortable, not try to soften the effect. I achieved a freedom and range of interpretation that I had never known. Three theoretical works concerned with the development and maintenance of identity had the most profound impact on my development: D. W. Winnicott's Playing and Reality, Heinz Lichtenstein's The Dilemma of Human Identity, and Norman Holland's The I.<sup>1</sup> Through my own interpretation and consolidation of these men's theories, I have arrived at the methodological approach that I will apply to my study of Beckett's drama.

D. W. Winnicott's theory is based on his idea that too much attention is paid to the internal processes of experience and not enough to the relationship between the internal and the external: "Cultural experience has not found its true place" (xi). He notes that the "intermediate area" between the internal and external has been recognized for centuries by philosophers, theologians, and artists and that such "a phenomenon that is universal . . . cannot in fact be outside the range of those whose concern is the

magic of imaginative and creative living" (xi). Because of the universal nature of imaginative response in infants and children, as exemplified by Winnicott's work with children, he suggests that this early relationship between the me, internal, and the not me, external, (specifically, how the me uses the not me) should, because of its impact on the adult personality, be included in any theory of human psychoanalytic development (xi-xii).

Winnicott's primary issue is "the paradox [his emphasis] involved in the use by the infant of what [Winnicott] call[s] the transitional object" (xii). In the "intermediate area between the thumb and the teddy bear, between oral eroticism and the true object-relationship, between primary creative activity and projection of what has been introjected" (2) the child deals with objects and certain phenomena (babbling, singing) in such a way as to suggest they are "not part of the infant's body yet are not fully recognized as belonging to external reality" (2):

this paradox, once accepted and tolerated, has value for every human individual who is not only alive and living in this world but who is also capable of being infinitely enriched by exploitation of the cultural link with the past and with the future. (xii)

My concern is with this idea of the paradox, the acceptance of which suggests that for full enrichment--in order to lead what Winnicott calls a creative life (65)--we must accept not only the idea that there is a me and not me but also that we must develop a unique, satisfying,

relationship between the me and not me. I also am fascinated with the notion of the intermediate area or "potential space" (100) within which this paradox exists: "an intermediate area of experiencing [his emphasis], to which inner reality and external life both contribute" (2), "a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated" (2). This is the place of childhood illusion and adult creativity. Because the not me refers to individuals as well as objects, this is also the place where relationships between human beings are developed, maintained, and destroyed.

Winnicott suggests that the individual discovers the self while playing in this potential space between herself and her environment, in the interrelation between the two (54). Heinz Lichtenstein suggests that the individual discovers the self, the sense "that I am," in the functions of identity, how one processes external stimuli. The core identity itself is "a biological adaptive principle" (114), with unlimited potential at birth:

Out of the infinite potentialities within the human infant, the specific stimulus combination emanating from the individual mother 'releases' one, and only one, concrete way of being this organ, this instrument [his emphasis]. This 'released' identity will be irreversible . . . . The mother imprints upon the infant not an identity, but an 'identity theme' [his emphasis]. This theme [his emphasis] is irreversible, but it is capable of variations. (78)

The theme and variations are determined by the manner in which the individual copes with her "basic predicament: the dilemma of symbiosis versus separateness" (9), the manner in which the individual relates to herself and others. We want to be separate but can only achieve this through relatedness: Human beings "must maintain their capacity for separateness, but cannot exist without being embedded in patterns of relatedness" (13). The functions of identity, the manner in which the individual processes information, are identifiable by their repetitive nature, their drive for balance. Thus, both Winnicott and Lichtenstein proffer that the sense of self--knowing that you are--is intrinsically involved in human relationships, the social matrix of the me and not me. Without human relationships, an individual would not develop an identity: "the inner awareness 'that I am' . . . is not an expectable certainty of ego development" (Lichtenstein 17).

Lichtenstein feels that the challenge his theory offers psychoanalysts is one of theoretical adaptations based on changes in the basic functions of modern man. He notes that when Freud first developed his theory, there was to a great extent still an average expectable environment in most parts of the world. Most people were born, lived, and died in primarily one specific social and cultural milieu, often even in the same geographical location. World wars, increasingly facile communication technics, rampant technological growth, job mobility, and the advent of the

nuclear family are only a few of the obvious reasons why modern man no longer lives with a sense of the expectable. Psychoanalytic theory today must be altered to include the notion that modern man has adapted to the loss of the average expectable environment by gearing all psychic functions towards the maintenance of a sense of self in a chaotic environment. The maintenance of identity has control over all psychic functions, all drives (331-333).

Of the many possible areas of correlation between Lichtenstein and Winnicott, I am primarily interested in two. Lichtenstein's placement of identity functions in the middle ground, or battlefield if you will, between symbiosis and separation easily relates to Winnicott's suggestion that the self develops in the potential space between me and not me. Also Lichtenstein's theory that modern man has altered his psychic functions in order to protect the self from a chaotic environment relates to Winnicott's idea "that compliance is a sick basis for life" (65). In other words, compliance to external chaos instead of creative intermingling with one's environment leads to the destruction of self.

In part using Winnicott and Lichtenstein as bases for his own theory, Norman Holland also speaks in terms of a paradox, or dilemma, when outlining his theory of identity. "I know my own I, as I can never know yours, yet like a dim star, like an after-image, if I turn my vision towards it, it disappears" (x). I cannot know that core identity, the

initial biological organizational principle that emerged in my preverbal relationship with my mother (Lichtenstein), except through the functions of that identity, functions that develop within the social matrix of relatedness with my world. Holland designates these knowable functions as "I ARC DEFTly" (xi):

I act forth into the world from myself as agent (A) and the world acts back onto me, so that I am a consequence (C) of what the world does both on its own and in response to my agency. My I initiates feedback but is also the consequence of the feedbacks it initiates. One can spell out those feedbacks as: expectation (E), what I am habituated to seek in the timestream of my experience; defense (D), what I will admit into myself from the world; transformation (T), the meanings outside of time that I make my experience into.

The I is agency and consequence, and something more. It is a representation (R) of an I, either the I's own or somebody else's. In particular, it is some I's attempt to put an I into words, and I propose one particular form of words. (xi)

Thus, to further relate Holland to Winnicott and Lichtenstein, the functions of my identity obscure my vision of the core identity, occurring as they do in the space between me and not me, in the potential space where I work out the struggle between my need to be at one with the external world and my equal need to be independent, separate. I can get, however, a sense of my core identity by noting how these functions repeat themselves as I deal with my world.

Holland speaks of the I, Lichtenstein speaks of the sense that I am, and Winnicott speaks of the me. Yet all



three theorists imply the universal need of man to relate to his world and the paradox inherent in each individual, who always remains somewhat unknown to himself, trying to relate to a world that always remains somewhat unknowable.

If I can never truly touch, know, the core of myself or of another human being, why do I persist in my efforts to do so? I have asked myself this question for months. Why do Beckett's characters, inhabiting his bleak stages, crammed into garbage cans and mounds of dirt, keep talking--keep reaching out into the chaos for reassurance? No matter how much our philosophers may pummel us with the notion that man is alone in the void, standing by the abyss, stuck in a meaningless language, the fact remains that I continually try to relate outside of myself, and so does every person I have ever known. Again, why? Because we do not receive all the answers, or simply all the comfort we need, from within? Because we are human beings and we want not only to know ourselves but to maintain and confirm our sense of self through others? As Lichtenstein notes, we do not develop a sense of self without relating to others. As Winnicott notes we do not develop a sense of self without being creative and creativity occurs in the space between ourselves and others. As Holland notes, our identity is intrinsically involved with our relationship to our world, our expectations, our defenses, our fantasies, our transformations: our theme and variations. We persist in our efforts to know others in order to assert our own

existence. We are driven to maintain a sense of self. Therefore, we are driven to seek relationships with other people because without these relationships or if the relationships are unsatisfying for our needs, we are not happy--we are not sufficiently self-defined. Should we seek to abort all relationships--to cut ourselves off from our world or become, involuntarily, unable to communicate--we are no longer human beings, having suffered psychological death.

Therefore, using primarily Lichtenstein, Winnicott, and Holland for psychoanalytic support, I explore identity in Samuel Beckett's drama. I combine the elements of repetition and contradiction with the relationships of his characters in order to assert that Beckett's characters proclaim their identities through their interaction with the external world, the world of the not me, and also that thematically his characters reveal the necessity for relatedness between the me and not me in order to achieve a satisfactory sense of self. Beckett's characters do not question that they exist (they either do or do not have a sense of existence). Their relatedness, or lack of relatedness, however, raises the question of how to exist, how to strike a balance between the me and not me (between separateness and relatedness), how to live in some kind of harmony with the dilemma of human identity. This suggestion for how to exist is, for me, the "something forming, flowering into shape" (Worth, Irish 262), the "darkness

invaded by light" (Cohn, Play 12), a revelation of simplicity, our need for interdependence, that I see embedded in Beckett's drama.

### Overview

In my first chapter I use Beckett's stage plays in order to explicate what I see as the framework for identity. I follow the same development that Lichtenstein uses to introduce his theory of the core identity, that in a basic way we all share: the struggle between symbiosis and separation. I discuss the repetition, contradiction, and relationships evident in these plays not only as they are revealed through the content of the plays but often through the staging. I determine that, for me, the silence that Beckett often seems to be leaning towards through his use of language, the seeming failure of communication and viable relationships, and his own stage directions becomes thematically twofold. The negative silence of total, irreversible withdrawal, a silence that, I suggest, occurs when one denies the human need to relate with the external world, the not me, posits the existence of the positive silence of personal thought, the silence of temporary withdrawal into the self.

Having explicated a framework for the discussion of identity, I proceed in the second chapter to choose one character from each of Beckett's radio plays in order to attempt to represent their identity theme, using Holland's

equation: I ARC DEFTly. Representing identity themes contains its own inherent problems since the theme of each character is necessarily altered by its filtration through my own identity. I respectfully submit, therefore, that each of my representations is one way of viewing the character, helpful and I hope insightful, but certainly not the only representation. In spite of the recreation through my identity, however, I find Beckett's characters to be diverse, unique, not the workings of a single minded writer but the workings of a man with an innate sense of the diversity of human identity.

In my final chapter I consider each of Beckett's television plays separately. Having worked on a production of these plays, I feel a personal insight worth sharing.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, my interpretations combine my personal associations with particulars of Lichtenstein's and Winnicott's theories that I have not previously developed and with others psychoanalysts whose work I find compatible with my main theorists.

By separating Beckett's dramatic works into stage, radio, and television plays and working chronologically within each medium, I find an increasing emphasis on dialogue, on speaking and, not necessarily in the same plays, on listening as it represents the crucial first phase of our response to the world. We do not develop a relationship, and thus an identity, by only arcing outward but by reaching out, receiving responses, and taking in the

responses in order to investigate and adapt them to our own sense of self. When Beckett reduces the physicality of his stages, we listen better and become more aware of our responsibility to listen, to ourselves, yes, but also to others. I suggest that we can do no better than to listen to Beckett; he may discourage me with what my world lacks, but he encourages me to understand and use what I have: my self and my ability to reach out to the world in my own unique way.

### Notes

1. Clearly, Freud's suggestion in Civilization and Its Discontents that ego development involved not only internal but external factors has spawned a wealth of theoretical writings on how much of each factor is involved in identity development. For other opinions (and this list is by no means complete) concerning identity, see works by Erik Erikson, Harry Guntrip, W. Ronald Fairbairn, Margaret Mahler, Karen Horney, Abraham Maslow, Jacques Lacan, Heinz Kohut, and Nancy Chodorow.

2. Professor Sidney Homan, the director of these productions (University of Florida, 1988), has written a book about the experience, Filming Beckett's Television Plays: A Director's Experience, soon to be published by the University of Michigan Press. We have compared notes and find that our different works offer different perspectives of the same process. I find this, ironically, an interesting example of the workings of identity.

CHAPTER 1  
THE STAGE PLAYS: A FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTITY

By revealing the elements of repetition, contradiction, and relationship in the stage plays and showing the connections between these elements, I build a framework of identity. My purpose is not to represent what those identities are, but to exemplify that this framework for a discussion of identity exists within each of the plays. I also reveal how the framework compares to the theories of identity proposed by Lichtenstein and Winnicott. The thematic result of the comparison is that human identity is intrinsically involved in a fundamental need to be separate but related, that an individual's sense of existence and self-definition can only be derived from a certain relatedness to the external world. Thus, I conclude that the move toward solipsism, toward silence, that Beckett's characters often attempt and at times attain is a move toward psychological death. The incessant banter of all of Beckett's characters (save the mimes) suggests a realization of the need to stave off the deadly silence, to maintain the dialogue.

### Repetition

The tendency inherent in the repetition compulsion is directed toward fixation within the flow of time, toward duration--indeed, we must dare say it, toward eternity. Heinz Lichtenstein (30)

When confronted with the compulsive repetitiveness of the human personality, Freud was compelled to try to fit repetition compulsion into his theory of the mind. He, therefore, introduced the notion of a destructive drive, or death instinct. People repeat behavior that hasn't worked in the past and will surely not work in the future. Freud could only assume that this was because there is a part of us that strives to destroy what the life drive strives to create, a part of us that strives toward annihilation instead of continuance, a part of us that strives "to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world" (Freud, Beyond 56). I note, however, that "no generally accepted viewpoint regarding the nature of this type of drive has been able to assert itself within the psychoanalytic school of thought" (Lichtenstein 24). Some theorists have rejected the concept of the death drive all together (24), while others, like Lichtenstein, have used Freud's primary data, the repetition compulsion, in order to postulate alternate theories.<sup>1</sup>

Lichtenstein notes that Freud was confusing repetition and restoration. The two words are not synonymous. Restoration concerns returning to a place where one was before. In repetition, there is no actual restoration. We



may return to a psychological place we have been before, but the return is brief, for we take off from that place at once (25-27). Lichtenstein points to the repetition that occurs in nature to support this: "If one were to represent repetition by a simple graphic delineation, the circle would be a suitable image of its movement" (25). He adds that "indeed, both the seasons and the sequence of day and night are the immediate consequences of the circular movement of the earth" (26). Thus, repetition cannot be linked to restoration, nor, as Lichtenstein adds, can it be held synonymous with retrogression (as the notion of a return to inanimacy suggests): "retrogression is uniphasic, continuous in the direction of its movement toward an unequivocal end stage" (27) not "biphasic" or circular like repetition (26). Lichtenstein suggests, then, that "the central aspect of the phenomenon of repetition . . . is the intimate link between repetition and the experience of time in man" (27).

In Beckett's drama, I suggest that his use of repetition also invokes a sense of circularity and intimacy, a cycle that fittingly echoes the natural world, and an intimacy with time, born of a continuing pattern of behavior, a sense of "duration." Repetition pervades all of Beckett's plays. I cannot point to one play that does not leave me waiting for the curtain to reopen and Play to repeat ad infinitum. Repetition is only possible because we have time on our hands (Lichtenstein 27), and certainly Beckett's characters have time on their hands. The

repetitive manner in which they cope with their time not only tells the audience much about who these characters are but also affirms that they are.

In Waiting For Godot (WFG) Beckett first startled audiences by breaking tradition, seemingly throwing out the unity of time and replacing it with a place outside time, a place of unchanging repetition, where one day becomes indistinguishable in memory from the next and how much time passes remains a mystery. I suggest that drama became more mimetic by dispensing with such a tradition. Does life actually consist of numerous vignettes, complete with exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement, all girdled by an abrupt beginning and an equally abrupt end? I suppose one could argue that that is exactly what life is--a birth, a death, and a life of major and minor plays in between. Such a metaphor for existence, however, assumes our ability to stand back and see life at a glance, to see the exact beginning and end of each of our varied experiences, to know that there is nothing before and nothing after. We cannot know this; thus, birth and death remain simply enigmas, not readily understood, isolated facts of existence but for all we know mere accidents in a series of accidents that precede and follow. Thus, instead of throwing out time and replacing it with repetitive monotony, Beckett's drama actually throws time into relief, creating a relentless backdrop against which we repeat ourselves as naturally as the world turns.

Repetition does not only occur within the plays themselves but is alluded to outside of the plays. Shortly after WFG opens we learn that Estragon (Gogo) spent the night in a ditch where he was beaten up, as usual:

Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?

Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.

Vladimir: The same lot as usual?

Estragon: The same? I don't know. (7)

Something in Gogo's identity makeup leads him to expect and accept being beat up on a regular basis.

From this beginning, the repetitions continue.<sup>2</sup> Gogo continually worries about his boots, Didi his hat. When Gogo sleeps, Didi wakes him. They twice consider suicide as an alternate to their grim life. The boy, or at least a boy, comes twice. Pozzo and Lucky come twice. Lucky does a dance and when asked to dance again, "executes the same movements" (26). The acts themselves are set up to emphasize the repetitive nature of a life spent waiting for Godot. However, just as Lichtenstein notes that identity is a "theme . . . capable of variations" (78) none of WFG's repetitions are exact. Variations abound. Gogo finds boots that fit in the second act and his boots cease to be an issue. Gogo and Didi both play with their hats. Gogo does let Didi sleep one time. The tenor of the scene with the boy is different in the second act: In Act I Gogo is angry and even shakes the boy; In Act II Gogo is sleeping and Didi is less aggressive with the boy, almost begging him to be the same boy, to remember them, to confirm the existence of

Godot. Although Pozzo and Lucky return in the second act, they are changed: Pozzo is blind and Lucky is mute. Despite these differences, the characters seem convinced that nothing varies. Didi "looks long at the tree" at the beginning of the second act; we presume he has noticed the difference. Yet when he tells Gogo "things have changed," "look at the tree," Gogo's response is, "Was it not there yesterday?" (39) They seem unable to communicate the notion of change to each other, implying that for them their lives are filled with meaningless repetition. Yet the subtle variations--the leaf on the tree--seem to belie this conviction. Time does pass, night comes, we grow old, "nothing to be done" (7), the world revolves--around and around. Every day Didi and Gogo meet and wait for Godot.

In similar fashion Hamm and Clov in Endgame (EG) live out a constant routine of fetch and look, do and undo. Hamm sends Clov to the kitchen, to the window, to fetch the stuffed dog. Hamm continually starts the same story--a story with no end. Hamm orders Clov to move him in a circle around the room and then insists that he be returned to the exact same place. From Clov's frustration and Hamm's orations, I can only assume that this sterile movement has been and possibly will be repeated over and over.

Endgame is, to me, the bleakest of the plays. There seems no way out, no salvation, no creativity--only repetition. All is stagnant. Nagg and Nell live in garbage cans, having lost their "shanks" (16). The windows only

reveal what there is no more of: nature, seeds, tides, navigators, rain, and on. The negativity of their world is repeated over and over: "outside of here it's death" (9). Surely the outside is moving in, for inside there now are no more pain-killers, sugarplums, pap, and on. Mother Pegg is dead; Nell is probably dead; Nagg is close to death. There is, however, the boy that Clov declares he sees outside the window. If the boy exists, if Clov is not merely himself creating a fiction, then the boy represents a variation, a possible way out. Perhaps, the only way to vary the theme that Hamm and Clov's life seems stuck in is for Clov to leave, to not simply vary the repetition by killing an occasional rat or louse, but to pull out of the cycle and create a new one, with theme surely in tact but new players. However, the strongest feeling that the audience is left with is that the curtain will close and then open again with Hamm removing his handkerchief from his face and calling for Clov. Clov comes.

Hamm and Clov's repetitive cycle involves a denial of the world outside. Krapp's repetitions in Krapp's Last Tape (KLT) are indicative of the parts of the world that he allows or that force themselves into his room--either through compulsion, like the tapes, or because it is beyond his control, like his bowel problems. Krapp's recreation, his creativity, has been reduced to repeatedly mouthing words that feel good to him like "spool" (13). He is addicted to bananas, quite a self-destructive habit for a

man suffering from constipation, but exemplary of the constipation of his brain matching that of his body. The tape he listens to cites the fact that he has always loved bananas and booze, and his actions on the stage convince us that little has changed. The repetition is situational and verbal. The suggestion is that Krapp listens to the old tapes on every birthday and then makes a new one. Based on his fascination with the old tapes, however, I suggest that Krapp does little else but sit and listen.

Krapp's listening to tapes affirms, in some skeletal way, his sense of a continuing self. In Not I (NI) Mouth, in between the small flashes from her life experience, repeats over and over her lack of such a sense. She was "spared love" (76) from birth. She has never been able to think of herself in the first person. The repetition of her life is that she has no life, no communication, no love. The Auditor repeatedly shrugs as if to say, "Yes, it is a pity, but I cannot help you." Mouth's inability to reach out has made her unable to be reached. Her life is over, and as she lies dying she repeatedly suggests why it never began.

Because Mouth was "spared love" from birth, it becomes easy to understand her inability to maintain relationships with others. When B hits A in Theatre I (TI), it is harder to understand why he is repeating behavior that has driven people away in the past. A is only repeating his need for an other but, at the same time, he seems over-compliant to

the external. A does, however, vary his behavior when "he seizes the end of the pole and wrenches it from B's grasp" (90), becoming himself the aggressor. Theatre II (T II) stages the repetitions of two men whose job, presumably, is to take inventory, both material and personal, of a suicide. They both turn lights on and off, worry about the dark, seem endlessly irritated with each other but end by pulling together for comfort. In Happy Days (HD) Winnie declares over and over how happy she is, despite her obviously unenviable situation, "imbedded up to neck" (49). The dialogue in Play (P) keeps returning to the original lover's triangle that the players would far prefer to the endless, harsh light. Come and Go (CG) finds Flo, Vi, and Ru doing just that, coming and going. In between they sit silently, but ultimately they are sharing themselves with each other.

Few critics, if any, have failed to notice the phenomena of repetition in Beckett's drama. For example, Cohn notes that Beckett is "relentless" in his "most pervasive verbal device, repetition" (Play 96). Steven Connor concurs that Beckett has "at the centre of his work" a "strong and continuous . . . preoccupation with repetition" (1). From Waiting For Godot through What Where (WW), Beckett's fascination with the repetitive nature of human existence is clear. His characters pace back and forth (Footfalls), talk incessantly (Piece of Monologue, That Time), rock in rocking chairs (Rockaby), only read aloud, or only listen (Ohio Impromptu). They are

repetitively compliant like Protagonist in Catastrophe (CA) or repeatedly bounce on and off the stage like Bam, Bem, Bim, and Bom in What Where. The audience senses, even though variations occur, that such behavior never stops. Thus, repetition underlies Beckett's plays and suggests man's desire to maintain a sense of sameness "within the flow of time" (Lichtenstein 30), a sense of identity. Within the repetitions, however, contradictions complicate the message and further exemplify the dilemma of human identity.

### Contradiction

If I appear at times to be contradicting myself, I like to think that's inherent in a dialectical process, but it may also be because I am contradicting myself, or very nearly so, since we will often be moving close to the edge of thought where truth shifts in the act of perception, you lose your balance, and thought slips.

Herbert Blau (Take Up xvii)

The confusion is not my invention . . . . It is all around us and our only chance now is to let it in.

Samuel Beckett (Driver 22)

According to Lichtenstein's theory of identity, contradiction is inherent to the human condition, not in any sense resolvable (13). If our concept of truth involves the resolution of opposites, the closing of all contradictory gaps, then it is no wonder that we lose our balance and slip. Contradiction is truth. As Winnicott notes, the human contradiction should be accepted, not artificially forced either apart or together (xii). Thus, there is no



dialectic process, only a struggle between two contrasting ways of being: alone or together. Stemming from this basic gap between the me and not me is a world of inherent contradiction: birth/death, love/hate, right/wrong. We human beings behave accordingly, constantly undercutting our own convictions, constantly musing over and wavering back and forth within the ultimate question: to be or not to be. Hence, not only do our personalities reflect contradiction but everything outside ourselves, everything man-made (our institutions, our art) reflect the same contradictions.

The contradictions in Beckett's drama operate on many levels. I have chosen to categorize them into two types: situational and verbal. Situational contradiction refers to the inconsistencies, often not realized or consciously ignored by the characters but patently obvious to the audience. For example, in Waiting For Godot Didi and Gogo both want and recoil from the world outside themselves. Although this is also verbally evident, often Beckett's stage directions cue behavior from the actors that specifically aims at relating this polarity to the audience. When Lucky falls, in Act I, Didi and Gogo are instructed to "turn towards him, half wishing half fearing to go to his assistance" (15). Also, Didi and Gogo part at night. The audience does not see the actual departure but do see their reunion at the beginning of the two acts. The contradiction consists in the mere fact that they would desire to reunite after the dreary day they have spent in Act one. Yet

reunite they do, a contradiction that the audience surely feels but Didi and Gogo seem unaware of except superficially. They only know that they meet, wait, and move on.

Krapp's Last Tape offers a situational contradiction, perhaps not so readily perceivable to the audience and certainly not an issue for Krapp himself, through Beckett's costume directions. Krapp is to wear trousers that are too short and large boots, "size ten at least" (9).<sup>3</sup> Noting Beckett's preoccupation in several plays with heads and feet (WFG, HD, FF, TT, etc.), I relate heads to intellect and feet to the body or merely the material, the closest part of us to the ground, the farthest from the mind. Krapp has grown increasingly distant from his connection with the physical; literally, his legs have grown, pushing his head (intellect) away from the ground (physical), but the large boots suggest that he is, nonetheless, still well-grounded (even stubbornly so and in spite of himself) in the physical world--perhaps out of habit, perhaps out of necessity, perhaps because if he is not, he's dead. Or is his unusual and ill-fitting dress merely a metaphor for the discomfort he feels in the physical world, despite his preoccupation with Spool five's vivid account of sexual union--a contradiction in itself?

Often a situational contradiction underlies the entire work. Obviously, it is contradictory to wait for a Godot who never comes or to eschew the world but spend the

solitary time recreating a relationship with the world through old tapes. In Endgame Hamm seems to be dedicated to an endstopped vision of the world, continually declaring "it's time it ended" (3), "it's the end" (79), but is equally dedicated to the creation of an endless fiction. Situational contradiction also underlies Rockaby, for it seems ludicrous that knowing her mother rocked herself into madness, the woman in the play follows suit. In Not I Mouth makes it clear throughout the play that she has always been unable to communicate, at least to communicate in a way that can be perceived/related to by others. Yet here she is, on the brink of death, telling all and doing it clearly--with Beckettian clarity anyway--to an Auditor who realizes, compassionately, that the communication comes too late.

Moving from situational to verbal contradictions, contradictions (again) not necessarily realized by the characters within the plays but often apparent to the characters in the audience, I open by citing that the situational contradictions 'acted' by Didi and Gogo, through Beckett's stage directions in the first act, are again emphasized in the second act, only this time verbally. Didi and Gogo want to help Pozzo and Lucky when they fall, want to reach out to these fellow humans, but hold back through not only fear but a basic ignorance as to how and why to help. Gogo fears another kick from Lucky, but also suggests that they use this opportunity to beat him up in return. Didi hopes for a reward for helping Pozzo but then

contradicts himself by launching into a speech that appeals to their humanity: "It is not every day that we are needed" (51). They should help Pozzo and Lucky in order to "represent worthily the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us" (51). In further contradiction, Didi later suggests that they help merely because they are "bored" and it will be a "diversion" (52). The dilemmas involved with helping another man are clear, if diverse. Do not help through fear or ignorance. Help for reward, for nobility, for diversion. Or interfere not to help but to hinder. Getting involved in some way, whatever way and for whatever reason, is a compelling notion and, of course, is the notion in this case that wins out. In a perverse way, contradiction, here, leads to interaction.

Another situational contradiction is echoed verbally through much of the play: the fact that Didi and Gogo leave each other at times, only to return to the same bleak spot. Verbally, this often takes the form of suggestions that they should part, coupled with questions as to why they stay together:

Estragon: (coldly) There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part.

Vladimir: You wouldn't go far. (11)

Estragon: . . . . I sometimes wonder if we wouldn't have been better off alone, each one for himself.

Vladimir: (without anger) It's not certain. (35)

Vladimir: We can still part, if you think it would be better.

Estragon: It's not worth while now. (35)

Estragon: Don't touch me!

Vladimir: Do you want me to go away?

Estragon: Don't touch me! Don't question me!  
Don't speak to me! Stay [my emphasis] with me!

(37)

Estragon: You see, you feel worse when I'm with you. I feel better alone too.

Vladimir: (vexed) Then why do you always come crawling back?

Estragon: I don't know. (38)

I want to be alone--independent. I also crave company, someone with whom to share. I want someone to share what with--this bleak existence, this boredom, this futility? Why not? Perhaps, together we can make our existence less bleak, less boring, less futile. There is a chance (just a chance) but a chance, nonetheless. Despite the contradictory nature of their relationship, Didi and Gogo seem to cling to this chance, not only in their endless wait for Godot but in their stumbling, yet creative, efforts to accept the contradictions inherent in their even being together (they never dwell long on thoughts of parting). We do not like each other very much because we see the same crushing faults in each other but perhaps together we can be saved--not in the biblical sense--but in the psychological sense. We can be saved from uncreative/unplayful aloneness.

Pozzo and Lucky at times share the stage with Didi and Gogo and surely add to the verbal contradictions of the play. Pozzo, in Act I bemoans the changes he finds in Lucky: "He used to be so kind . . . so helpful . . . and entertaining . . . my good angel . . . and now . . . he's killing me" (23). Yet a few lines later, when questioned by

Didi and Gogo as to whether he wants a replacement for Lucky, thus forcing him to remember his outburst of feeling, Pozzo avers "I don't remember exactly what it was [I said], but you may be sure there wasn't a word of truth in it.

. . . Do I look like a man that can be made to suffer?" (23). His use of the word suffer suggests that he does remember what he said, but his need to appear the independent master, the lord of his emotions, forces him to deny any close feelings for a mere slave. In a similar contradiction, Pozzo submits, "Yes, the road seems long when one journeys all alone" (16). Pozzo is not alone. Lucky is with him. He might as well be alone, however, because the nature of the master-slave relationship presumes, however mistakenly, that any relationship beyond the one of master-slave, especially one that implies mutual need and succouring, is impossible, contradictory.

Lucky's main contradiction borders on the situational because it involves no speech on his part, but I mention it here with the verbal contradictions because the physical action involved speaks so loudly for him. Didi and Gogo feel compassion for Lucky's predicament with Pozzo but when Gogo attempts to help him, Lucky delivers him a resounding kick. Both audience and main characters are overwhelmingly aware of the contradiction delivered with this blow. How can a man so abysmally treated by one man not react gratefully to a sympathetic hand from another? It is not until Lucky does speak, however, that he expands his own

personal state of contradiction into universal terms and loudly proclaims one of the play's major themes with all its overt inconsistencies. When Lucky "thinks" he wanders from man's desire for a God to man's equal abhorrence of the hell that a belief in God assumes to man's confused state of existence to man's drive to continue, to "resume for reasons unknown" (29). In fact, the phrase "for reasons unknown" is repeated no less than ten times within this speech. The contradictions inherent in this chaotic world and the tenacity of man to "resume" are at the heart of all contradiction and often at the heart of Beckett's art.

Both the contradictions evident in Didi and Gogo staying together and Pozzo and Lucky's seeming equilibrium are apparent in the dialogue of Endgame. Hamm treats Clov like the slave that Lucky is, but Clov stays. Hamm and Clov often discuss Clov leaving, but Clov never does and Hamm, like Pozzo, is ambiguous in his feelings about Clov leaving.

Hamm: Why do you stay with me?  
 Clov: Why do you keep me?  
 Hamm: There's no one else.  
 Clov: There's nowhere else. (6)

If, as Hamm is always telling us, the end is at hand: "It's finished, we're finished" (50), then why does he need anybody, why does he suggest "with ardour" that they leave: "Let's go from here, the two of us! South! You can make a raft and the currents will carry us away, far away, to other . . . mammals!" (34)? When Clov says "I'll leave you," Hamm, fearing that he really will, says, "Outside of here

it's death" (9). Is there death outside or life, life with "other . . . mammals" (34)? Clov needs to leave: "I see my light dying" (12). Hamm seems to understand this for often he suggests that Clov do just that: "I thought I told you to be off" (14). Yet when Clov threatens to leave, Hamm panics at the thought, begs Clov to at least kill him before he goes (37). Hamm fears being alone. He fantasizes what his life will be like alone: "There I'll be, in the old shelter, alone against the silence and . . . the stillness" (69). He will call to his father and his son and when no one comes, "I'll say to myself, he'll come back" (69). But Clov won't come back and Hamm will sit and wait for horror to befall him:

All kinds of fantasies! That I'm being watched!  
A rat! Steps! Breath held and then . . .  
(He breathes out.)  
Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary  
child who turns himself into children, two, three,  
so as to be together, and whisper together, in the  
dark. (70)

Like a father who both loves and hates his progeny because a child offers love but also dependence, Hamm knows Clov should go and his bluster professes an ability to be alone himself. But he also fears for Clov in the outside world and fears for himself in his internal one. There is no resolution, only contradiction. Endgame ends with Hamm believing himself to be alone while Clov stands motionlessly on the stage.

Like Hamm, Krapp's contradictions are firmly based in his decision to withdraw from the world but his ultimate



inability to do so. There are many women mentioned in the tapes from Krapp's past, leading me to suggest that they, above all other trappings of external existence, symbolize for Krapp being caught up in the physical world. The relationship that is emphasized the most concerns his long ago experience with the woman in the punt, and it is through Krapp's reactions to the memory of this experience that the main contradiction in the play is realized. His voice from the past opens the scene by recalling their conversation: "I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on, and she agreed, without opening her eyes" (22). Then he falls into a lyrical description of the two of them making love in the boat, ending with "we lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side" (23). With a woman whom he will surely leave, he experiences the physical contradiction of the earth, that no matter how we strive to be still, to unite and remain at perpetual orgasm, the world moves on and we move with it.

After listening to this sexual encounter, Krapp switches off the tape and rails at himself for listening to "all that old misery" (26). He moans that "once wasn't enough for you" but quickly falls back into the memory: "Lie down across her" (26-7), and plays that part of the tape again. He protests that these times of physical encounter with the world were the times of misery, but he listens again. This contradiction persists throughout the play.

The tape ends, with Krapp noting that "perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back" (28). Surely the reclusive, aged Krapp would outwardly agree with this revelation from the past, but the Krapp who longs for contact with the world has just listened to the love scene for the second time and as the play ends, with "Krapp motionless staring before him" (28), I wait for Krapp to reach up and rewind.

Winnie's manner of dealing with her existence in Happy Days stands in startling contrast to Krapp's. As Knowlson and Pilling note, Winnie and Krapp are like "non-identical twins who have chosen quite different paths in life" (93), but the paths rest on lives that are fundamentally the same, lives that bear the burden of the same inconsistencies. There can be no question that Winnie's condition is as miserable, if not more miserable, than Krapp's. In contradiction to her condition, however, Winnie will try anything to find a way to be happy for at least a moment of every day. She reminisces about old times with Willie; she remembers as many contacts with other people, no matter how insignificant, that she can; she struggles to remember the words to old poems and songs. At times the misery of her present life forces itself into her conscious thoughts. She bemoans the idea that no one is listening to her. She thinks that perhaps it is too much to ask to be heard. Such suppositions, however, seem unbearably cruel to her, her "voice breaks" (24), and she drops such unhappy thoughts.

In the midst of a miserable existence, Krapp attempts to maintain contact with his misery despite a happy memory and Winnie refuses to let unhappy thoughts dwell for long in her attempt to overcome her misery.

In Footfalls (FF), May who only speaks to a voice I suspect she has created, contradicts her isolation by insisting that the floor be stripped of its carpeting, declaring "I must hear the feet, however faint they fall" (45). She insists on a dialogue with the world, "however faint." In Theatre II A and B speak of a man as if he is dead and yet we see him standing by a window in the background. Ohio Impromptu (OI) consists of a Reader continually reading and a Listener continually listening to a "sad tale a last time told" (34). Yet, I know that even though there is "nothing left to tell" the Reader will continue to read and the Listener to listen. Protagonist in Catastrophe raises his head in defiance of Director's instructions, "fix[ing] the audience" (27), and contradicting his previous compliant behavior. Bam in What Where keeps referring to the passing seasons but no change is evident either on the stage or among the characters; the dialogue contradicts its own staging.

The contradictions inherent in our existence are the underpinnings for much of Beckett's drama. From his earliest drama to his latest, the notion echoes that our very birth is fraught with contradictions: In 1952 Pozzo avers that we are born "astride of a grave" (WFG 57), and in

1970 the Speaker asserts that "birth was the death of him" (Piece of Monologue 70). Beckett's breaking of dramatic tradition is a contradiction; it is contradictory that in such a chaotic world we cling to traditions. It is contradictory that although Beckett's use of the stage often shatters tradition it also confirms tradition because the stage itself does not change only what happens or is placed upon it. His characters on one hand accept loneliness as part of life but on the other hand continuously create others in order to belie their loneliness. The lone character on stage is just that--on stage--wailing about his or her inability to relate to the external world and yet doing it in front of a room full of people. Even characters who have been rendered mute, like the Listener in That Time (TT), adopt voices with which they reach out to the audience in an attempt to pull them into a relationship that (however filled with contradictions) seems better than being alone.

### Relationships

It takes two. Caught in their self-inflicting worlds, Beckett's solitary characters need, or create, or demand . . . someone else, whether it be an actual person or an alter ego or a mental projection. Sidney Homan (Theaters 47)

If I stop at this point, what I have said is that Beckett's characters constantly repeat themselves, often with negative consequences, and within this repetition they contradict themselves. Beckett's plays are repetitive

structurally and yet contradict that very structure by breaking with traditional dramatic form. It could, at this point, be safe to say that Beckett's drama reveals a world in which, like the earth turning on its axis and whirling around the sun, each of us turns in circles and whirls around in our own small cycles of repetition and contradiction. Such a world is bleak indeed. But identity, with its inherent dilemma, is not solely an issue of repetition and contradiction. We know that we are because we relate outside of ourselves, with other people, with the environment (Lichtenstein, Winnicott, Holland). It is here in Beckett's drama, in this realm of relationships, that I see the proof that relationships, however unsatisfying at times, are a major (and positive) theme in the plays, that we do not simply exist but we exist in relationship to the not me, the world outside the me. Hassan affirms that Beckett's characters "reveal [their] individuality not so much through gestures and words as through their relations to one another" (199). I suggest that these relationships, that are established and maintained in the potential space between two people/characters, are representative of what makes us go on, makes us continue to hope.

A plethora of relationships are represented in Beckett's plays: father and son, mother and daughter, friend and friend, stranger and stranger--working relationships, love relationships, hate relationships--relationships that work, that frustrate, that console, that condemn. One

thing, however, becomes clear; without relationships, without contact between the me and not me, all is silence. The fierce phantom of silence, the shadow of the grave, hovers over Beckett's characters who react with a cacaphony of often meaningless words, a mania of often futile activity. Within this frustrating noise and activity, amidst the threat of silence and motionlessness, the echoes of relationships persistently reverberate. In their drive to go on, Beckett's characters reach out for and find a certain solace in others.

If I might be allowed to set up a hierarchy of sorts, I would suggest that Didi and Gogo have the most active and positive relationship of any of Beckett's characters. Active, in that they are both verbally and physically involved with the maintenance of the relationship and positive because the relationship persists not only throughout the play but, based on the suggestively repetitive sequence of the acts, beyond the play. Pozzo wails, "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (57). What Didi and Gogo do is pass the time between birth and the grave--the time of light--together. Kennedy notes that judged by "a Western culture imbued with classical, humanist, socialist and, increasingly, technological goals," Didi and Gogo could spend this time more productively, for on the surface all they do is wait (32). Beneath the inane banter and

vaudevillian antics, however, lies creative play and the dilemma of human identity.

Creative play is for Winnicott the successful realization by the child that there is a division between the child and the external world while at the same time continuing to subjectively play with "that which is objectively perceived" (3), learning creative manipulation within the boundaries acceptable to the social milieu but at the same time satisfying to the child's creative impulse and sense of autonomy (50-52). Translated into adult psychology,

it is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living. Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation. (65)

Without question, Didi and Gogo are caught up in a state of compliance with its ensuing "sense of futility" in which "nothing matters" and "life is not worth living" (Winnicott 65). "Compliance is a sick basis for life" (65), but on the healthy side, Didi and Gogo have each other and play creatively in the potential space between themselves, using dialogue as their tool, each simultaneously juggling the need to be separate with the need to be together. Didi and Gogo imagine that their wait is not futile. They create a less drab future for themselves beyond Godot. Nothing may matter to them for long but waiting, but the waiting has purpose for them. The waiting is, for them, "a type of

action" (Kennedy 31). They may think life is not worth living, but their banter about suicide is merely more creative play.

As I noted before, Didi and Gogo often wonder if they would be better off alone, but they cannot leave each other. Didi often suggests that it is Gogo who needs him, implying that he would be fine alone: "When I think of it . . . all these years . . . but for me . . . where would you be" (7); "I missed you . . . and at the same time I was happy" (38). Gogo, however, is the one who most often suggests parting while Didi won't even let him sleep, "I felt lonely" (11), and is the happiest at each reunion, "Where were you? I thought you were gone for ever" (47). It is Gogo who seems aware that Didi needs him. When they argue about who will try to hang himself first, Gogo says, "Gogo light--bough not break--Gogo dead. Didi heavy--bough break--Didi alone" (12). Thus, Didi and Gogo, regardless of how thoroughly each understands his own and the other's need, stand "back to back" (47) against their fear of the world: "Huddled together, shoulders hunched, cringing away from the menace, they wait" (15). They embrace several times. Sometimes one or the other shies from this closeness, but at other times the touching is mutual--close--profound. They are there for each other:

Estragon: You'll help me?  
 Vladimir: I will of course. (44)



Estragon: (on one leg) I'll never walk again!  
 Vladimir: (tenderly) I'll carry you. (Pause) If  
 necessary. (22)

Only "if necessary"--part of Didi recognizes that Gogo must stand alone, if possible; but if it is impossible, "if necessary," he should be carried. They need each other. So, yes, I will carry you, "if necessary."

In sharp contrast to Didi and Gogo are Pozzo and Lucky. There seems to be no hope in this relationship, no movement that is not futile, no communication beyond the physical. Pozzo admits, "I am perhaps not particularly human, but who cares?" (19) Fittingly, it is Pozzo himself who cares by the second act. He is now blind and in need. He has fulfilled the "if necessary" condition of Didi's promise to help Gogo but Pozzo has no friend; he only has a one-sided symbiotic relationship with an equally compromised and compliant Lucky. Certainly, there can be no other description of the master-slave relationship of Pozzo and Lucky. The umbilical cord has been replaced by a rope and neither man can move without the other. Pozzo can no longer see and Lucky can no longer speak. Pozzo can no longer order Lucky into the right direction and Lucky is unable to tell Pozzo which way to go. Any human reacts to the prolongation of the symbiotic union (it is a dismissal of the external world which in turn precludes the development of a sense of self). I picture Lucky purposefully losing his voice in order to lead Pozzo into thorny bushes and over rocky paths. Lucky would not want to lose Pozzo completely,

for Lucky is as trapped as Pozzo. Lucky might, however, want to hurt that half of himself represented on the other end of the rope, the half of himself that won't let go, that never lets him be alone--be separate, be not who he is but who he should be--could be.

I do not want to leave the impression that Didi and Gogo are the pinnacle or that Pozzo and Lucky are the pit of human relationships. Their relationships are merely specks on an endless scale of human potential. There are as many ways to relate to an other as there are others to relate. It is more to the point that these characters have relationships, that however flawed these relationships might be, they exist and persist.

In Beckett's drama, relationships exist even when words don't. In Act Without Words I (AWW I) and Act Without Words II (AWW II), man's relationship to his world is plumbed through mime. Again, the question of compliance comes into focus. At first, both plays seem to be addressing man's relationship to inanimate objects, objectively perceived. In Act Without Words I I the mime struggles to overcome obstacles to reach the physical means for life: water. In Act Without Words II the mimes seem to merely take up space, to crawl in and out of their sacks and deal with the objects both necessary and superficial to their existence: food, pills, clothes, watches, toothbrushes, maps, etc. It is as if the external world forces itself upon the mimes in both plays. In a sense the external world does force itself on

man; it forces day and night, thus light and dark, weather, seasons, etc. Yet man, even in the most primitive of societies, adapts to such phenomena. No, here there is something else at work; it is the mimes in relationship with some external human element, society itself or a Pozzo or a Godot. For in both plays, a prod triggers the action. The natural world does not blow whistles at us, dangle food in front of us only to keep pulling it out of reach; the natural world does not poke men into performing perfunctory activities. The mimes are compliant, totally dependent on the external world of man, only activated by prods from others. Like Didi and Gogo in their unending wait or Lucky and Pozzo in their symbiotic union, total reliance on the external denies the self and leads to frustration and hopelessness. Act Without Words I ends with the mime sitting, now ignoring the whistles, staring at his hands unable to comprehend their inability to achieve his goals. His hands are unable to help him because he is unable to relate to a world without whistles; he has been in total compliance and, therefore, he has been manipulated. He is frustrated; he is a failure; he has no sense of self. Act Without Words II ends as it began with two motionless sacks on the stage, filled we know with two mimes, and two piles of clothes. No frustration here--only total compliance, and total compliance sets them up to be victims of their own world. They do not act upon the world of men; therefore, the world of men acts upon them. It is not only the mimes

who are to be pitied in their lack of self; it is also the human beings behind the prods--the whistler/the goader--for they too are as surely trapped as those they manipulate, as much victims as the victims they create.

Act Without Words I and II indirectly point to the manipulator; Endgame puts the manipulator on center stage. Charles Lyons suggests that

in Godot Beckett explores the partnership of the two primary characters, representing the subtle complicities, compromises and patterns of acceptance and rejection that mark extended relationship. He continues that investigation in Endgame. (51)

If Waiting For Godot is primarily concerned with the relationship of Didi and Gogo, Endgame is primarily concerned with the relationship of a Pozzo and Lucky: Hamm and Clov. Hamm is Clov's master, perhaps even his father. For even though he denies being Clov's father, he does say "it was I was a father to you" (38) and refers to Clov as his son when alone (69). Their relationship, however, is at first revealed as that of master-slave. Like Lucky, Clov has become enured to his role. When Hamm sleeps, Clov "go[es] to [his] kitchen . . . and wait[s] for him to whistle" (2). He has nothing to do but wait for instructions. Clov, though, is rebellious while Lucky is not, asserting "I can't be punished anymore" (1). If, as Homan suggests, we think of Clov as actor to Hamm as playwright (Theaters 64), then the actor is rebelling out of a desire to be master of his own creations. In his

rebellion, Clov's relationship with Hamm becomes a dialogue, both men acting and reacting. When reacting to Clov's rebellion, Hamm seems more like a father, both jealous and yet protective of his son. Clov does not understand why he buckles under to Hamm: "Do this, do that, and I do it. I never refuse. Why!" (43) Clov wants out: "I see my light dying" (12). But when he tells Hamm he wants out, he wants to relinquish his subordinate role, Hamm counters with "outside of here it's death" (9). As father, symbolic or real, Hamm knows Clov should go; Hamm urges him to: "Look at the earth." Clov: "Again!" Hamm: "Since it's calling to you" (72). Yet, Hamm dreads losing control. Hamm tells Clov to speak, to be his own man, create his own fiction, but then does not want to hear what Clov creates (80). Hamm wants to maintain his role as creator, creator of Clov and sole creator of the fictive world in which they live. He wants Clov to speak only to maintain the dialogue. Mere articulation is all that is necessary; meaning is unimportant, even undesirable: "We're not beginning to . . . to . . . mean something?" (32) Clov laughs at the idea. The thought of the two of them creating some kind of meaning together frightens Hamm: "To think perhaps it won't all have been for nothing!" (33) The existence of meaning of any kind, especially meaning created through a relationship, would destroy Hamm's fiction about life. Finding meaning is like Clov finding a flea. Hamm is "perturbed" (33) because "humanity might start from there all over again!" (33).

Hamm is determined that the world end with him, with his narrative.

When Clov sees a young boy outside, Hamm sees his fiction falling apart. How can he hold Clov now? How can Hamm convince Clov that "outside of here it's death" when Clov has seen life through the window. Hamm must see the prediction of his own father, Nagg, coming true: "I hope the day will come when you'll really need to have me listen to you, and need to hear my voice, any voice" (56). Like father, like son; Hamm was left to cry at night; Nagg didn't listen to him. Now, Nagg has nothing to do but listen and Hamm won't talk to him. Hamm has Clov but for how long? The end of the dialogue is the great threat:

Hamm: Before you go . . .  
       (Clov halts near door)  
       . . . say something.  
 Clov: There is nothing to say.  
 Hamm: A few words . . . to ponder . . . in my  
       heart. (79)

There is "nothing" left to say. The dialogue is over and Hamm fictionalizes his end, covering his face with a handkerchief and determining to "speak no more" (84). Still, he does, and his final line leaves the audience at odds: "You . . . remain" (84). Is it Hamm, the "old stancher" (84) who will remain, even without Clov? Or is it Clov, who still stands by the door, who will remain? Will Clov follow his desire to be separate--especially knowing that there is other life outside to relate to when he is in need? Or will he "remain," stuck in a one-sided role of

compliance to his father's vision? The emphasis of the play has been pushed from the stage into the audiences' laps. Each of us must decide what we believe Clov will do and, I suggest, each of us decides based on our own experience with relationships, our own feelings about leaving home, no matter how long ago we may have done that. My students, feeling brave and independent outside of their parents' homes for the first time (in, however, the protective environment of a college) almost unanimously decide that Clov will leave or, at least, that they want him to. Each has a different reason for feeling this way. In large part, though, they voice disdain for Clov staying and taking Hamm's abuse, for Clov's seeming compliance.

Danger lies in over compliance to the external, but danger also lies in over compliance to the self, in withdrawal from the external. Witness Krapp in Krapp's Last Tape. Krapp, who withdrew from the world in order to write his "opus magnum" (17), has been reduced to a mumbling drunk who recreates the external world by listening to his own voice from the past. Although Krapp has intentionally cut himself off from the world of relationships, the opening stage direction places a "happy smile" (12) on his face as he searches for the spool he wants. He obviously relishes the anticipated reunion with his past self, a self that time has turned into an other. I say an other because Krapp does not recognize his own identity theme as it unwinds off the tape, even though, as Cohn notes, "the voices utter the same

phrases, are prey to the same hope and despair" (Comic 249). He interacts with the tape as he would, and probably did, interact with others: he contradicts the tape, he shuts it on and off, he makes it repeat itself, he searches for places to connect.

The younger Krapp notes that he passes part of his birthday at the Winehouse, alone: "not a soul" (14). Were there no other people there or was he purposely ignoring them or were they purposely ignoring him? He avers that he was glad to return to his room. There are no people there, but he "strain[s his] ears" to hear "Old Miss McGlome" sing (15). He wanted to be alone. Or did he? There is no lack of darkness in his room--darkness looming outside the halo of light around the young Krapp and his tape player just as the dark surrounds the older Krapp. "With all this darkness round me I feel less alone" (14-15). He interacts with the darkness like he interacts with people. The dark is simply there, hovering around him. An unknown quantity, the darkness replaces another unknown quantity--others. He can't acknowledge his need for others, but he symbolically replaces them. He considers that he is "separating the grain from the husks" (14) then wonders what he means by "the grain"(15): I suppose I mean those things worth having when all the dust has--when all my dust has settled" (15). What are "those things worth having"?

As he listens to the tape, the older Krapp suggests an answer to this question by his actions. Shortly after



discussing the thing worth having, the younger Krapp remembers the death of his mother, waiting on a bench for the blind in her room to be pulled down. "The blind went down" (19), and Krapp disassociates into a discussion of "a small, old, black, hard, solid rubber ball" (20) which "he might have kept" (20) but gave to a dog. Obviously, his relationship with his "small, old, black, hard, solid" mother was not a thing worth keeping. Not merely because she is now dead but because the metaphorical association of her with the ball reveals a less than satisfying relationship to begin with, literally that he began with. After dispensing with his mother, Krapp recalls a revelation he had about the nature of his existence. Just as he begins the revelation, the older Krapp stops the tape and fast forwards to the portion of the tape on which the younger Krapp is remembering making love in a boat on the water: "We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side" (21). Krapp stops the tape, starts to record a new one, stops again, puts the old tape back on and listens to this same section again. Here is one of "those things worth having." Here is a revelation about the nature of existence. Krapp's "rejection of a genuine relationship with another, for the sake of preserving an isolated narrow 'me,' is the whole tragedy of the play" (Barnard 116).

Concerning the "genuine relationship" with the woman in the punt, I note that Lichtenstein proposes that sex is

often nonprocreative in nature, "constituting a mutually affirmative response to each other's being" (12), allowing for "a heightened sense 'that one exists'" (12). Through his unconscious effort to regain this profound sense of existence, Krapp suggests that for those few moments after making love, life is not static and man does not live in isolation but in constant interaction with a world in motion: "under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side" (23). Far from the lyricism with which the love episode is narrated sits the stark revelation of Krapp's life today. Knowlson and Pilling state that "with the words they [the tapes] contain, they represent the only form of contact that Krapp can achieve in a depleted, almost totally isolated existence that, ambiguously, he has sought out and yet dreads" (83). On the new tape Krapp notes that he is alone save for the occasional visit of a prostitute, a "bony old ghost of a whore" (25). This revealing, cold reference to Krapp's present life is sandwiched in between the two times he listens to the experience he had with the woman on the boat and perfectly highlights Krapp's bony old ghost of a life, a life in which he has lost touch with the motion of the external world, a life that reeks of solipsism and decay.

I do not get the sense that the world gave up on Krapp as much as I do that Krapp gave up on the world. Old age has slowed him down but not stopped him. If anyone might be excused for giving up on the world, it has to be Winnie in

Happy Days; old age has stopped her, physically, but she will not give in. She despairs but she will not let despair run her life; "although Winnie's resolute cheerfulness is suspect, her happy smiles and words nevertheless lighten the atmosphere" (Cohn, Comic 257). What keeps her going is an endless stream of language; her voice confirms her existence. She relates to anything and everything she can pull close enough to her. In Act I Winnie, buried to the waist, can still move enough to use the physical accouterments of her life to pass and map the time. All others are fair game to Winnie. Her opening dialogue even confuses Willie with the toothpaste tube: "Poor Willie" is "running out" but it "can't be helped--just one of those old things" (9). In Act II Winnie has lost more of her mobility; she can no longer use her objects and it is becoming harder for her not to despair. She can, however, still summon a smile when Willie pops up at the end of the act, because "for all Winnie's resources of good cheer . . . it is mainly to Willie that she owes her happy days" (Cohn, Comic 257). Though his look frightens her, his voice calling her name evokes a "happy expression" (64) and "oh this is a happy day" (64). Winnie knows she talks too much but she cannot stop; talking keeps her in contact with the world: "Ah yes, if only I could bear to be alone, I mean prattle away with not a soul to hear" (20-21). Winnie always assumes that her voice is being heard. Rationally, she does not think Willie hears much of her "prattle" but

because he does on occasion respond, "that is what enables [her] to go on, go on talking that is" (21): ". . . just to know that in theory you can hear me . . . is all I need" (27).

Winnie worries about Willie. Even though their contact is brief and erratic, if Willie died Winnie could no longer delude herself into believing that she is being heard. Like Hamm in EG, Winnie senses that her existence, her sense of being, is wrapped up in her dialogue with a living other. She muses about just sitting--no more talking--"Nothing to break the silence of this place" (21). Winnie never dwells on such morbid thoughts for long. She moves on, prattling about the past, invoking old, half-remembered lines from poems and songs, throwing out her voice and hoping, against hope, to be heard, to receive some response, no matter how trivial. She will not give up her relationship to the world, no matter how bleak her world gets; she talks and waits and on occasion receives a word in return, smiles and murmurs, "Oh this is a happy day, this will have been another happy day!" (64)

Winnie's voice finds frustratingly little response; the voices in Play (P) find none. They refer back to a time of relationships but the only relationship now is with the light that evokes response, a light that ideally comes from the footlights between stage and audience (62), a light that becomes the inquisitor and whose placement leads the audience into becoming the light. As Homan notes, the

revelation of the voices is "nothing more than that of a hackneyed love triangle" (Theaters 105). Why do certain narratives become hackneyed? Because they are too often the stuff of literature. Why are love triangles so often the stuff of literature? If literature lures readers in part by offering likely tales, a certain verisimilitude, then love triangles are often presented because they are often evident in the world outside of literature. The triangle is an old story--as old as man perhaps. I think of Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, and Aegisthus; I think of Eve, Adam and the snake (I always assumed that the serpent gave Eve more than an apple). Thus, the three voices speak out to the audience, luring them with a bit of their own lives and then the triangle falls away; it has achieved its purpose.

The foremost relationship of Play is between the characters, born of urns, and the audience, born of women. The urns are hard, unyielding, unforgiving; a return to the urn, like a return to the womb, signals an end to individuality--separateness--and total enclosure within an other. The players of Play are totally at the mercy of the inquisitor because they cannot escape the urn/womb. The audience takes on the role of inquisitor, or at least jury to the trial's prosecutor, forcing the players to speak, to babble about a time before they were enclosed in the urns, a time when their relationships with each other, however confused, were dealt with in some kind of balance between separate and together. Now they are prisoners of the

inquisitor, the audience. They do not have the freedom even to be miserable in a triangle gone awry. By constantly returning from the despair of their current situation to the retelling of the triangle, they betray that they would all return willingly:

W1: I said to him, Give her up--

W2: One morning as I was sitting--

M: We were not long together-- (61)

They would all exchange this symbiotic torture for the uncertainty/the dilemma of their old lives together. As audience, I feel uncomfortable keeping them trapped in their urns, listening to their babble, turned meaningless by their oppression. Karen Laughlin suggests, we are reminded that "all dramatic speech is presented for the benefit of an onlooker whose shifting attention and potentially aggressive probing in this case are embodied by a scenic double, the spotlight" (339). I am glad that this play is brief for I am suffocated by this role of oppressor, angry that my dramatic voyeurism has been turned against me. The end comes blissfully soon.

The relationship between Beckett's plays and his audiences is often unique, even trying (and a book in itself). In Come & Go, however, the relationship between play and audience is more traditional. The characters relate to each other upon the stage and the audience is pulled up on the stage in order to fill in the gaps. Here, as in Play, there is once again a triangle, a triangle of women, and even here they do their most explicit relating in

twos but the final effect is, unlike in Play, one of union, the union of all three. Within the union we are first shown each woman relating to one other. As Homan suggests, the women are "on the verge of tragedy, where each victim . . . knows of the tragedy about to visit or already visiting two others, all the while remaining ignorant of her own" (Theaters 114). If such is the case then all three will experience tragedy in union, as they live in union. What form the tragedies will take is left for each member of the audience to imagine. It almost seems immaterial because whatever the whispered revelations may be, the women, as a trio, remain unaffected.

Like the children they once were, sitting in the playground of Miss Wade's school, the women sit on a narrow bench and remember that time--of youth, of innocence, of "dreaming of . . . love" (68). As children, they used their imaginations to propel themselves into an uncertain future. How does this connect with the women today? Did their dreams of love come true? They sit together now as they did as children, but what has ensued between these two times of union? Perhaps, they all did love, fulfill their dreams. Now they meet in satisfaction to review these early relationships in order to replay a closeness they've enjoyed in other ways since then. Or are they renewing their childhood imaginations? As Beckett's stage direction insists, "no rings [are] apparent" (70). Thus, when Flo gushes happily, "I can feel the rings" (69), she is

reestablishing their imaginative lives together--only this time turned toward the past, a past that never lived up to their childish dreams of the future. If such is the case, they remain undaunted, for in their present union they can creatively play, recreate the past through this satisfying union in the present. Certainly, if they are using their imaginations to replace reality, it seems harmless enough, actually heart warming. "Their hands form, in fact, the pattern of an unbroken chain, an emblem that, traditionally, has been used to symbolize eternity" (Knowlson and Pilling 122). Seeing them on the stage, thus linked, is "an evocation of togetherness and endlessness" (122). I put Flo, Vi, and Ru on the rung just below Didi and Gogo. The women are less active in their creative play but they are surely as positive in their relationship (separate but together) and even though they are also stuck in a bit of a rut, their closeness transmits to the audience as warmth.

Beckett has not turned romantic on us, for a scant four years after Come & Go, Not I premiered (1972). Winnie is reduced to a head, speaking from atop a mound; the characters in Play are reduced to heads and speak from urns; in Not I "the talking head has become a mere phonating mouth named precisely Mouth" (Elam 129). Not I is one of Beckett's grimmest plays but it is also the most psychologically explicit of the plays. Mouth repeatedly maps out her inability to relate out to her world. She was an abandoned child, brought up "with the other waifs" (15).



She received "no love" (15), "no love of any kind" (15), ironically noting that she was "spared that" (15). She was shut down, turned off, at an early age, becoming "powerless to respond . . . like numbed . . . couldn't make a sound . . . not any sound . . . no sound of any kind . . . no screaming for help for example" (17). As Lichtenstein notes, "There is never any certainty that, once born," a child "is going to become human" (11). Human beings can only develop identity "through a specific kind of interaction with another one from whom an affirmation of the reality of existence can be obtained" (11). Instead of experiencing interaction, Mouth experienced solitude, becoming "silent as the grave" (17) inside, "speechless all her days" (18), unable to relate because she had no self from which to relate.

There were, however, times in her life when she tried to reach out, times she spoke, on "rare occasions," "certain vowel sounds" (18). People simply "stared at her uncomprehending" (18); therefore, she determined that it was "not her voice at all" (18). She is "no longer searching for a coexistence with [her] authentic first person singular but is instead frantically running away from such an encounter" (Brater, Beyond 23). She totally disassociates from her verbal self, and faced with this lack of a sense of self and her inability to communicate, she creates an other out of herself. There is adamantly no I:

just the mouth . . . like maddened . . . and can't  
 stop . . . no stopping it . . . something she--  
 . . . something she had to-- . . . what? . . .  
 who? . . . no! . . . she! (15)

As she lies dying and for the first time uncontrollably babbling, the thought keeps creeping up on her (keeps buzzing in her ear)--the thought that the she of her babble is her I, but she will not, she cannot, at this point, acknowledge the waste. Even Auditor expresses an understanding that it is too late for her. Auditor's movements of "helpless compassion" (14) always occur right after the four times that the mouth comes close to admitting the I into her speech and fails. The auditor, as representative of the external world, a figure "closer to the ordinary expectations of reality" (Worth, "Auditors" 169), is compassionate but helpless because there is no way to reach into a human who cannot reach out in however basic a way. The Mouth's inability to speak is representative of a total inability to reach out. She has no personal voice. She is on the verge of death. If no sense of self develops, can one reach out from nowhere? Beckett appropriately published this work in Ends and Odds and places this play under "Ends." Not I is most definitely about an end, an end with no beginning.

Under "Odds" in this same publication, Beckett offers Theatre I. I translate this heading as not so much referring to the odd nature of the play but to the odds against the development of healthy relationships. The

struggle to do so is an integral part of life and thus, far from being about ends, Theatre I is about beginnings--perhaps in this case--false starts. B, who is crippled and in a wheelchair, meets A, who is blind and plays a fiddle for money on a corner. Noting how ideal their union would be, of what mutual benefit, B suggests that A join forces with him, that they "join together, and live together, till death ensue" (81). B would guide A, see for him, and feed him; A would push B, walk for him, and let B call him Billy (after B's son). Such a relationship seems ideal, but the two men do not at first consider other aspects of relationships--aspects beyond the external. It would seem from the ensuing action that B is basically cruel and A is smothering. B is threatened by A's dependence; B thinks he asks only for interdependence. He is horrified at the thought that A would help him for no return, but at the same time he shuns A's need. A hugs B, seeking warmth, but B hits him then rues his action:

Now I've lost him. He was beginning to like me  
and I struck him. He'll leave me and I'll never  
see him again. I'll never see anyone again.  
We'll never hear the human voice again. (86)

The suggestion is that his striking out is not new. When he first hits A, B cries "forgive me, Billy" (85), perhaps suggesting that he drove away his son in a like manner. B invites relationships, then fights them off. He fears being alone to the extent that he slips into the third person plural, "We'll never hear," in order to stave off

loneliness, but he can't control his conflicting needs: "I have seen man for the last time, I struck him and he succoured me" (86). Is B truly cruel or simply horribly threatened by the thought of a real relationship? Is A really overly dependent--smothering? Perhaps not. He is enthusiastic: "You mean you would guide me? I wouldn't get lost any more?" (85) He is grateful: "It's a gift! A gift!" (85) The play seems loaded in B's direction basically because he is the more aggressive of the two. A is passive in the acceptance of his need, his gratefulness to B for offering him a relationship. He is caring, tucking B's foot in for him, asking only what he needs in return: B's sight. "Is it still day?" (88) However, he reacts to B's cruelty by the end, "whirl[ing]" at him, grabbing the pole B hit him with, "wrench[ing]" it away (90). This play belongs equally to both men; both have needs, and their needs define the type of relationships they seek. B feels betrayed by his need and responds aggressively. A accepts his need, is grateful for the chance to relate to an other, but in the end is betrayed by B's inability to follow through; A must himself become the aggressor in order to protect his own sense of self.

If Theatre I is a betrayal of man to man, then Theatre II is, on the surface, a betrayal of another kind: of men to man, a betrayal of humanity. Two auditors sit and recount a man's life; the man is standing at the window preparing to jump or, more likely, it is his shadow there because he has

already jumped. After holding a match to his face at the end of the play, "A takes out his handkerchief and raises it timidly towards C's face" (111). Two elements of the auditors' perusal bother me. The first is that they are defining the man by public record: "We've been to the best sources" (95). The second problem is that when they are not using public record, they rely on the account of people who knew him or merely knew of him. The man himself has disappeared from view. Still, didn't they have to get the information in that manner? After all, he is already dead. The men have no other way to reach C which perhaps is signalling that he had no way, other than suicide, to reach them. In the midst of a list of physical ailments suffered by the man, B notes that he had a "need of affection" (101) without which he developed an "inner void" (101). He was "morbidly sensitive to the opinion of others" (101) in some vague, indirect method of trying to make contact. Morbid sensitivity is only reaction, not a satisfying relationship. It is hard to tell anything about this man from such slanted presentation, filtered through too many interpreting identities. Why are A and B here doing this to begin with? More and more I become convinced that the play is not about the lone man but about the two men talking about him, doing their job, together.

When I look at these two men, the lighting around them forms the foundation for my reading of their relationship. Throughout the stage plays, Beckett's light is at times

sourceless (PM), at times holding away the dark (KLT), at times "hellish" (HD), at times a symbol of life itself (Breath). In fact, Knowlson and Pilling suggest that "the main image cluster [Beckett] employs is the one that is perhaps at the base of all Beckett's thinking: the opposition between, and interaction of, light and darkness" (16). Hassan adds that "bright light seems to be Beckett's theatrical symbol of sterility as well as of lucidity" (196). I suggest a third reading, involving different types of light. We need light, literally, to find each other and, spiritually or intellectually, to reach out to each other. But often, as in Theatre II, the light is suggestively artificial, a creation of human technology and as such, not perfect--not reliable--cold. The lamps in Theatre II pop off at random, plunging the two men into the dark. Coupled with the cold manner in which the two men are approaching their subject--their human subject--the erratic light creates a ghoulish effect, frightening the men into pulling together, together against the cold, the dark, the "inner void": B asks, "May I come to you? (Pause) I need animal warmth" (103). A is reluctant but ends by allowing B to approach and sit near him. Human technology and bureaucracy are artificial attempts to close the gap between men, to stave off the dark but are unreliable in the final assessment: B trembles, "What would we do in the dark the pair of us? (103) Stripped of such artifice, what they have is each other. Without each other, without the warm light

of relationship, they can only rely on the artificial and unreliable light of technology or the inner void--for there is no self without an other.

A specific example of total reliance on the inner void is found in That Time. Here it takes little conjecture to assume that A, B, and C are all parts of the same person. There is one man on the stage and the voices, though varying in tone and tempo, belong to one man (28). As in Not I, there is no I; the man wonders, "Did you ever say I to yourself in your life" (31). Without an I, a sense of self, the man is unable to relate outside of himself. It is a vicious cycle, a Catch 22: If you do not relate outside yourself and receive response, you do not develop a sense of self; if you do not develop a sense of self, you cannot relate outside of yourself nor receive any response. Stuck in his "inner void" (T II 101), the man creates three others who speak directly to him. One of the others (A) speaks about his initial move from people as a child, a move that seemed safe at the time but kept him from developing relationships, a time "when you started not knowing who you were from Adam" (32). As a child he fled from people, hiding in ruins, alone but with a picture book to stimulate his imagination into creating his own others, "muttering away now one voice now another" (35). It worked for a while, "talking to yourself who else" (31). The child never developed a manner of coping with outside reality, of reaching out to others, of ciphering response and

manipulating it to fit his own needs. Therefore, fittingly, a second voice (B) remembers a love that dies from lack of interaction: "not touching" (29), "no looks" (29), "no sound not a word only every now and then to vow you loved each other" (30). Can love last with no real interaction? Having lost his love, a third voice (C) remembers his efforts now, as an old man, to find a haven from a world that he perceives only as a threat, a world that acts on him. Like the mimes of Act Without Words I & II this man is a victim of the world because he cannot reach out, assert his own will onto the external. He is alone, "with [his] arms round [himself] whose else hugging [himself] for a bit of warmth" (29), "muttering to [himself] who else" (31), while the voices, the three others he created, act like mnemonic devices, triggering each other, in turn, to relive the failure of this man from childhood to adulthood, the failure to develop a relationship with his world and, therefore, the failure to develop an I.

By creating others, the man in That Time creates a response, however intrasystematic. In Footfalls May creates a response by removing the rug upon which she paces so that she can hear the sound of her own footfalls: "I must hear the feet, however faint they fall" (45), "the motion alone is not enough" (45-6). The motion, however, "acquires . . . a strange form of justification . . . . May's solitary pacing" represents "the externalization of an inner anguish" (Knowlson, "Footfalls" 352). May, in her forties, paces



back and forth on the stage, first having a dialogue with the voice of her mother (perhaps May's own creation), then the mother's voice alone speaks, then the voice of May. The voice speaks to May and about May: "She has not been out since girlhood" (45). May speaks to the voice, at first using the I, then after the voice tells the story of May, May speaks in the third person, creating a fiction about Amy (May) which seeks to fill in the gaps of the voice's tale but fails. Amy has been to church with her mother, who observed something strange. Amy, however, observed nothing, "nothing of any kind" (48). The relationship here seems to involve religion, but how is anybody's guess. I sense that the young woman, already cut off from the external world (relating only to the original symbiosis with the mother) realizes that she is also cut off from the spiritual world or, in a sense, because she cannot relate to other people, she cannot relate to the church they created. May needs the world, others, but cannot resolve the circular dilemma of being with versus being apart: "Will you never have done . . . revolving it all? . . . In your poor mind" (48). She will not, because the revolving never stops. It is the individual who must accept the cyclical nature of existence, the human dilemma, the revolving--and go on.

The going on itself becomes a dilemma in A Piece of Monologue (PM); going on for a man alone consists of a running dialogue with no one (save the audience). A man with no self, no I, speaks to no one. He does not even have

the benefit of a compassionate Auditor as in Not I. Like in Not I, however, psychological background is evident. "Birth was the death of him" (70). He was "bandied back and forth" between "mammy" and "nanny" (70). His life from birth was filled with the threat of loss, and every loss since then has fed into his anxiety. Seven times in the monologue when his memory triggers thoughts of others, he says "he all but said of loved ones" (70), or some close variation on that line. He wants to deny that he has loved because loving makes the loss so much greater. The losses he fears are losses to death, "the dead and gone. The dying and the going" (79). Thus, more and more I feel that he like May has never come to terms with a basic fact of life. We die. If we cannot or will not make contact with others in our life out of, ironically, fear of loss then there is nothing to life except birth and artificial light and death.

For here again much of the monologue revolves around a lamp; the voice speaks of attempting to light it, watching it smoke, comparing it to the dark, watching it fade. The man, however, never actually moves, and the lamp on the stage is an electric lamp. Thus, like in Theatre II, a comparison is made between two types of light, a light within man, the light of interdependence with his world, a light he wants and a manmade light which is again shown to be unreliable. When the electric lamplight is out or close to it, the Speaker wonders what it will be like without light. He knows, however, that without the manmade light

there is still light: "No such thing as no light" (74). Yet the light of the self in tune with the world, the light not manmade, is illusive, "whence unknown" (73). Because this man never bonded as a child--"There was father. That grey void. There mother. That other" (72)--he can't cling to the light of self and relationships. He has no I, no life, except waiting for death: "Birth was the death of him" (70).

In Footfalls May clings only to an irretrievable symbiotic relationship. In A Piece of Monologue the Speaker's lack of a symbiotic relationship leaves him nothing to cling to. In Rockaby (RB) we are returned to the symbiotic relationship, as we watch a woman imitate her mother, following her mother into isolation, into the rocking chair, into madness. This woman does not retreat from the world without a struggle. In the midst of her descent from the external, she still searches for a connection:

going to and fro  
all eyes  
all sides  
high and low  
for another  
another living soul  
one other living soul  
going to and fro  
all eyes like herself (10)

She repeats words such as "beside," "side-by-side," "inside," "outside." Despite her seeming understanding that there is a me and not me, that there is a world outside, like a baby in a cradle, she rocks and prays that the world, the other, will come to her. Like the child who waits for

the mother who doesn't come, she becomes "decathected" from the mother, thus losing her ability to relate outside of herself because the outside has become meaningless (Winnicott 15).

We do not see the woman herself speak. She has created an other who speaks for her. Her voice is heard but her lips do not move. The story Voice tells of her mother, "off her head" (18), who retreated from the world, and obviously from the woman, becomes the woman's story. She cannot relate to "another living soul" (10) and yet she continues to wait, to hope, even though she thinks it is "time she stopped/time she stopped [Beckett's emphasis]" (9). She has, however, created someone to relate to, she "was her own other/own other living soul" (19), out of the desperate thought that she is the only other:

facing other windows  
other only windows  
all blinds down  
never one up  
hers alone up (15)

She feels not that she has cut herself off from the world but that the world has cut itself off from her. Like the man in That Time, she alludes sarcastically and repeatedly to her aloneness: "when she said/to herself/whom else" (9), "to herself/whom else" (10). At one point, like Winnie in Happy Days, she muses whether she asks too much of the world. She would be happy just to see another blind up, another set of

famished eyes  
 like hers  
 to see  
 be seen  
 no  
 a blind up  
 like hers (15)

Winnie needs someone to hear her; this woman needs someone to see her or needs merely to see someone. Her identity is intrinsically related to perception: esse est percipi, a concept I borrow from Beckett's (borrowed by Beckett from Bishop Berkeley) statement of theme in Film (163). Without some kind of perception and response, a human being has little left but to wait for the end, the dark, the end of a light she's never seen.

Being left to wait leads many of Beckett's lonely characters to the past. The man in That Time remembers trying to relate to the world; Winnie remembers old songs, old loves; the woman in the rocker remembers her mother. Without a sense of self and the ensuing chance of future relationships, one is left looking backward, constantly reliving something certain, something the outcome of which never changes, creating a morbid link with the past. Such is the case in Ohio Impromptu. I find I cannot consider the Listener and Reader as two people but only two parts of one character. Perhaps I am nudged into this interpretation by Beckett's stage direction, stating that the two characters should be "as alike in appearance as possible" (27). Cohn notes that Reader and Listener are "two images of the same figure" ("Resonance" 14). Whether they are two or not,

there is no relationship here, only a morbid preoccupation with the "sad tale" (34). There is no forward movement, no growth, "no sound of reawakening" (34). All thought is "buried in who knows what profounds of mind" (34). The tale of loving and losing and never recovering is not the tale of mankind; it is man's creation, man's fiction about life. The Reader and Listener create their own end, their own traditional narrative, then sit "as though turned to stone," the "sad tale a last time told" (34).

The sad tale in Catastrophe seems to return to the master-slave relationship of Pozzo and Lucky or, even clearer, to the man/men and manipulators of Act Without Words I & II. Catastrophe revolves out from itself, creating broader and broader interpretations of the relationship between Protagonist and his manipulator and to Protagonist's relationship with his world in general. If taken literally, Protagonist is the actor who is at the mercy of Director. Protagonist is not allowed a personal interpretation of the play; he can only do what he is told, be molded into Director's vision. In another sense, Protagonist is the artist; he is being forced to create his vision, to perform his art, only as directed by some external force: the critics, the public, the government. Since Beckett wrote this play specifically for Vaclav Havel, a Czech playwright who had been imprisoned by his government, it seems plausibly that the government is the manipulator.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Antoni Libera suggests that the play

is a parable of Man and Satan. Protagonist (Havel) is Man (344); Director (Communism) is Satan (346). To place the interpretation in less mythic terms, however, Protagonist becomes any man living under a tyrannical regime, any man who must compromise his principles, must seem to be in total compliance, in order to remain safe. Like Fox in Beckett's Radio II, Protagonist remains compliant to the external manipulations of Director and Assistant through most of the play. Unlike Fox, Protagonist, despite Director's admonitions not to, "raises his head, fixes the audience" (27). At this point his relationship to the staged audience comes into play. Before he lifts his head, as he stands, stripped of personal movement, stripped of most of his clothing, exhibited in total compliance, there is a "distant storm of applause" (27). After he thwarts his manipulator, projecting his own interpretation of the play, his own art, his own will, "the applause falters, dies" (27). Does the audience share Director's view? Do they begrudge the actor his moment, the artist his vision, the human being his freedom? Or does the audience "falter" because they realize the gravity of Protagonist's move? They realize the trouble he may start, trouble that might spread to them if they show public approval for his gesture. The mock audience members, themselves trapped into compliance through fear, recognize and are shocked into silence by Protagonist's flagrant act of will. His relationship to the others in his world becomes clear. He is one of them and yet he is one step

away from them. He has moved from total compliance, and perhaps secret rebellion, to open rebellion. By retreating to silence, the audience joins the manipulator and enlarges the chasm between Protagonist and his world.

Compliance again becomes a prominent issue in What Where, a play that offers a vision of man in decline: "We are the last five" (310). Even reduced to five, however, Bom, Bem, and Bim remain in a relationship of compliance to Bam, who himself seems to be driven by a force unknown, unseen, the fifth character, to find answers that apparently do not exist. The play ends: "Make sense who may. I switch off" (316). For me, this proclaims that there is no sense to be found in this world, not in any concrete way, but the play is about man's continued search for it. In the process, man develops his hierarchies. Bam is the speaker; Bam is the manipulator. The others simply follow Bam's lead, his voice, his determination to find out what and where? Bam, Bim, Bom, and Bem relate to each other through their combined efforts to answer the unanswerable and all of them relate to the fifth unseen character, a Godot perhaps, from whom they feel the pull of imaginary strings. The relationship of these men to each other and to the unseen fifth is barbaric but it is what they have, and they have it here. They will not or cannot communicate what they know to each other, but they will continue to try.

This mania to continue despite the conditions is certainly a primary feature of Beckett's drama. Considering



Beckett's stage plays in chronological order has offered me a glimpse of the increasing emphasis of such concerns. Homan offers, "From the open road of Godot to the room/womb of A Piece of Monologue, Beckett's world moves inexorably toward some inner space" (Theaters 194). I interpret this movement as an experiment in identity. How far away from the external can a character be removed and still remain a character, identifiable to the audience? Beckett increasingly handicaps his characters. Didi and Gogo can only wait; the mimes cannot speak; Krapp is becoming more and more isolated in his room; Hamm cannot walk or see; Clov cannot sit; Winnie is bound to her neck in a mound of earth; the characters in Play are stuck in urns/wombs; Mouth (NI) is disembodied as is the old white face in That Time; May can only pace nine steps in two directions; the Speaker in A Piece of Monologue can only speak; the Reader and Listener in Ohio Impromptu are turned to stone. Beckett's increasing manipulations of his characters' capacities to speak, to cry, to move suggest manipulations of their capacity to identify themselves, to relate to the outside world, and thus to define themselves through a relationship with that world. As Cohn contends, the Beckett hero "comes to doubt everything, and even to doubt the interpreting subject; his 'I' is a working hypothesis that no longer works, and yet there is no one else he can be" (Comic 294). Several characters refrain, even recoil, from the use of the I. As Cohn notes, however, the characters can be no one else.

Because of this dilemma, they rarely stop trying to relate despite how frustrating such attempts are at times. They create others out of parts of themselves; they remain in humiliating relationships out of fear there will be no others.

Beckett narrows the capacity of his characters to relate as far as he can but ultimately they go on trying. In the few plays where the suggestion is that they do not go on trying (AWW I and perhaps EG), the characters are left in silence, psychological death. I sense that the plays ultimately reveal that the bottom line of human identity is not aloneness; the bottom line is that as far as possible and for as long as possible, the characters will go on trying to relate. Hassan avers that Beckett's works "mark an asymptotic line moving steadily, cruelly, toward silence and immobility" (114). Asymptotic is the critical modifier here because the works can never, will never, reach silence and total immobility and still be concerned with human existence. I cite Judith Dearlove who best summarizes how I view the movement in Beckett's work:

Beckett's canon, in fact, moves away from angry denunciations of relationships to acceptance, if not affirmation, of the impossibility of either disproving their existence or displaying their absence. (4)

In further explanation of his "asymptotic line," Hassan notes that Beckett's "literature of silence is not without a voice; it whispers of a new life . . . it does not merely question art but also human consciousness and the

destiny of man" (201). As Beckett moves slowly but surely toward "silence and immobility" (Hassan 114), he also moves slowly but surely to a realization that silence and immobility are not integral parts of human existence but desperate fictions created by individuals who for what ever reason are unable to relate to the world in which they most certainly exist, whether they are able to realize it or not.

Through the relationships, Beckett's drama points to all corners of our lives. We wait when we should act, we wallow in the past instead of flowing into the future, we build walls to stand against, we reach out but often too late, we rely on artifice and fiction. Man is never up against a wall unless he builds the wall himself. Man is never stuck in the past unless he chooses to be. Man does not have to wait for life to come to him; he is life. Life is not linear, but cyclical (circular). Good blends with bad, right with wrong, separate with together, today with yesterday and tomorrow. There are no walls in a circle; there is no past but a flow of past, present, and future. I cannot stand away from the world and rely solely on my self because I have no self without the world. Beckett's drama does not set a grotesque world in front of me and show man struggling to find an identity within it. The plays show me a world in which cognitive dissonance is a given; thus, it is a world of each individual's creation, a world I am free to fictionalize out of my own identity, an identity fiercely determined to survive stumbling blocks of its own making, a

world created in the potential space between me and not me, created by conflicting needs--the need to be alone and the equal need to be together, the dilemma of human identity.

### Silence

One aspect of the dilemma of human identity is the fact that outside a relatedness to another one it collapses. Heinz Lichtenstein (13)  
The rest is silence.                      Shakespeare (Hamlet)

In Waiting For Gotot Gogo notes, while eating a carrot, that "the more you eat the worse it gets" (14). It could refer to the carrot or to hunger or to life itself. Whatever the reference, the statement points to Gogo, even upon receiving what he needed, as irritable--unsatisfied. Didi declares that he is different; he gets "used to the muck" (14). Such differences between the two, Didi suggests, are a "question of temperament" (14). Gogo agrees; difference is a question "of character" (14). There is "no use struggling" because "one is what one is" (14). There is "no use wriggling" because "the essential doesn't change" (14). Thus, in this early play, Beckett makes reference to an unchanging core, different for each character, a unique sense of being. He does it through the dialogue, the voices mingling in the potential space between Didi and Gogo. Even Pozzo moans "I have such need of encouragement" (25). Dialogue--voice and response--become necessities for identity, for a sense of existence, in other

plays too. In Endgame Hamm wails, "It's finished . . . . There'll be no more speech" (50). Clov asks, "What is there to keep me here?" Hamm retorts, "The dialogue" (58). Winnie, in Happy Days frets, "I can do no more. (Pause) Say no more. (Pause) But I must say more" (60). Remember she speaks only because she assumes she is heard and receives an occasional response. Krapp, after suggesting the dark keeps him from feeling alone, comparing this unknown to an other, remarks, "I love to get up and move about in it, then back here to . . . me. (Pause) Krapp" (15), thus creating a symbolic dialogue with the dark. Even Beckett's cryptic little vignette Breath implies a reference to dialogue. The light even though it reveals only garbage is not what evokes the screams. The screams occur during the dark at the beginning of the play and at the onset of dark at the end. The dark, then, represents a time before and after the light, an unknown. The opening cry is the birth cry upon entry into a world in which like the madman in Hamm's tale, "all he had seen was ashes" (EG 44), a world with which he could not relate. The second cry, at the onset of dark, bemoans the loss of at least the chance to create a dialogue with the light, the world. Again using the dark as representative of aloneness/silence, the man in That Time wails that he had "no words left to keep it out so gave it up gave up" (37). In Ohio Impromptu the Listener and Reader sit "as though turned to stone" because there is "nothing

left to tell" (34); they have entered the inanimacy/the darkness of silence.

The loss of the ability to relate with others signals the end of identity, the end of an assurance of existence, the encroachment of the dark, of death, of silence. Many grim moments of silence pervade these plays. After Lucky's regression to pure thought, having withdrawn to the point that he is insensitive to the others' cries for him to stop, "he falls" (29) and becomes totally insensate. As Cohn suggests, when speaking about one of Beckett's prose characters who tries to withdraw to pure thought (Murphy), "Withdrawal into the mental microcosm results in death" (Comic 50). Lucky is only returned from his withdrawal by the forced return of his relationship to the world, by receiving the bag (his burden) back into his hands (30). In Endgame Clov "harshly" berates Hamm for not responding to Mother Pegg's request for "oil for her lamp," citing, "You know what she died of, Mother Pegg? Of darkness" (75). She died because she had no one with whom to share a dialogue. Then at the end of Endgame, Hamm, believing the dialogue to be finished, swears to "speak no more" (84) and places the handkerchief over his face, cutting out what light, if any, his blind eyes allow in. In Act Without Words I the mime, in frustration at his inability to relate is left motionless---a mime's silence---staring at his hands.. Krapp's withdrawal into his inner world leaves him "shivering in the park, drowned in dreams and burning to be gone. Not a soul"

(25). While the woman in Rockaby, unable to reach out to "another living soul," retreats to her rocker saying, "Fuck life," "Stop her eyes," "Rock her off" (20), resigning herself to the impersonal dark of the third person.

Creating others within the self, as opposed to reaching outside of the self to "real" others, is in itself a form of silence. Krapp's silence is broken only by the sound of his own voice on the tapes. His turning the voice into an other and relating to it is a false relationship and only perpetuates and intensifies his movement away from the world of people and into the negative silence of a self out of sync with the world. He does, however, have the occasional visit from the prostitute, so the silence is not complete. Such is not the case for Mouth; her withdrawal is complete; her silence is complete. No matter how much she babbles, she never can admit that it is actually she who is babbling. Like the buzzing in her head, the babbling is meaningless because it is incapable of pulling her out of herself into the world. The voice often becomes meaningless in these plays. The characters in Play, no matter how much they speak, are relating to no one; those days are past. The man in That Time has created three others but because there is no self, the outcome is silence. The same holds true for the speaker in A Piece of Monologue and Rockaby. The creation of others from within the self is a ruse, a deluding creation of response, a mockery of relationships, and ultimately of little use.

Beckett's characters are repetitive and within those repetitions, contradictory. These repetitions and contradictions epitomize the dilemma of human identity. The characters wish to be one with the external world but cannot because to do so means to annihilate the self; they turn then to silence only to discover that within silence lies the same pit of annihilation. Guicharnaud aligns with Lichtenstein's theory when summarizing Beckett's characters, noting that we should define man by his "fluctuation between the two extremes": man alone and man in "communion with others" (110). To be is to be perceived not only by the self but by others, and by others in a specific way. In a satisfying relationship, each individual is affirmed as existing and continuous in their existence. Human identity is the struggle to be separate but together, is the struggle both to bridge the gap between subject and object, the me and not me, and to blow up the bridges periodically in order to return to silence, not the negative silence that a failure to relate brings but a positive silence accompanying a solid sense of self in relation to the world. Thus without the objects there is no silence. Without forays into the external world, there is no I. Beckett's characters do not question that they exist (they either do or they do not have a sense of existence). Often, they are only too painfully aware that they do exist or equally distraught because they don't. They are creatures of habit, habit which assures them a certain sense of continuity; they



reach out to others in order to assure their existence and, in contradiction, they repel others in order to assure their independence. There is no one way to be. There is only an occasional balance between togetherness and aloneness, an occasional laugh, an occasional amen.

### Notes

1. The major debate in psychoanalysis since Freud is, as I understand it, not merely his postulation of the death instinct but to what extent, if any, instinct theory is a valid explanation of how the human personality develops. The most thorough revelation of the many facets of this debate that I have found is Morris N. Eagle's Recent Developments in Psychoanalysis.

2. Waiting for Godot and other Beckett plays are so filled with repetition that Ruby Cohn invented terms to use in order to distinguish between different types of repetition: simple doublets, interrupted doublets, distanced doublets, echo doublets, etc. See her chapter "The Churn of Stale Words" in Just Play.

3. In Just Play Ruby Cohn reveals that when Beckett directed KLT in Berlin (1969), "he eliminated Krapp's clown makeup and endowed him with worn-out rather than farcical clothes" (246). Cohn notes he made this and other simplifications of the stage in order to focus attention less on the comic and more on the "abrupt and vivid disjunction between still listening and agitated non-listening" (246).

CHAPTER 2  
THE RADIO PLAYS: I ARC DEFTLY

In the preceding chapter, I suggest that Beckett's stage plays manifest, not only in content but often in form, the framework for a discussion of identity. Turning to Beckett's radio plays, I investigate one identity in each of the six plays, offering my representation of each character's identity theme using Holland's equation: I ARC DEFTly. I first reveal that the radio plays also contain the basic framework for identity by noting the repetition, variation, and contradiction apparent in each play. I do not discuss the relationships because they will become obvious as I discuss each character.

All That Fall, though presented in one act, can easily be divided into two: In the first part Maddy, an overweight, woman in her seventies, travels along a country road to the train station to pick up her blind husband, Dan, upon his return from work. She encounters several people, interacts (unsatisfactorily) with each, and reveals her great sadness, the loss of her daughter many years before. The second part of the play consists of Maddy and Dan's return home along the same road. The most striking repetition in the first half of All That Fall involves Maddy Rooney's repetitive

reactions to each person she meets on the road to the train station. She clarifies this herself when she says, "They come towards me, uninvited, bygones bygones, full of kindness, anxious to help . . . genuinely pleased . . . to see me again" (53-4) but "I estrange them all" (53). Maddy first asks each person she meets about illness in the family; then she does her best to keep the conversations on a negative path, always toward the revelation of her great sadness. She repeatedly drives people away. Dan Rooney also suggests that he is in a repetitive rut when he considers retirement, noting that he will "never tread these cursed steps again. Trudge this hellish road for the last time" (71), as well as when he compares the repetitiveness of his job versus the repetitive drudgery of life at home. Dan also repeats his fascination with harming a child: "Did you ever wish to kill a child?" (74) "Many a time at night, in winter, on the black road home, I nearly attacked the boy" (74). There are also the illnesses; Dan has been ill, for all we can tell, all of his life. In the second half of the play, while Dan is revealing his repetitive nature, Maddy is curiously refreshing in her attempts to keep the conversation lively, varying her previous behavior. After the trauma of descending the stairs, Maddy cajols Dan with "we are down. And little the worse" (71); when threatened by the Lynch twins, Dan fears they will be pelted with mud but Maddy bravely enjoins him, "Let us turn and face them"

(74). Faced with Dan's negativity, Maddy becomes a positive force.

Mingled with the repetition and variations in All That Fall are contradictions. We learn, for example, that the very fact that Maddy ventures forth to meet Dan at the station is a contradiction when the station-master tells Maddy "it's nice to see you up and about again. You were laid up there a long time" (51), and then Dan exhorts: "Why are you here?" (67) An even sharper contradiction is evident when Maddy refers to all the people she has met along the way as "uninvited" (53), "horrid nasty people" (68). Maddy instigates all of her encounters. Maddy calls out to Christy, she invites Mr. Tyler to "dismount" (38) and walk with her, and she seems happy to see Mr. Slocum: "Well, if it isn't my old admirer" (44). Another clear contradiction occurs at the station when Maddy declares "Don't mind me. Don't take any notice of me. I do not exist. The fact is well known" (48). The fact is that all of the people she meets acknowledge her, and her dialogues with these people, filled with her woes concerning her existence, strongly suggest that she is well aware of her existence. As noted, Maddy's personality, which seems set to us by her encounters with others, radically changes when she is with Dan. In fact, their entire relationship seems, at first glance, contradictory because Dan treats Maddy with a disdain the others have not, yet she doggedly seeks to please him. Finally, the title of this play is itself a

contradiction, for, although Maddy and Dan worry about falling, they never do. Machines fail/fall around them, a chicken is run over, many people they know are ill and falling, yet at this moment Maddy and Dan may be bowed by the storm but they do not fall.

In Embers an old man sits by the sea that drowned his father and muses about his father, who rejected him, and his wife and child, whom he rejects, all the while creating an endless fiction of male bonding that also never comes to a satisfactory conclusion. The most constant repetition is the sound of the sea which fills every pause in the play. Backed by the sea, Henry repeats his fiction twice, invokes horses several times, repeats his need for an other, recreates several others, and often describes his "all day all night nothing" lifestyle. I do not find that Henry varies his vision of the world or his actions, but he is one of the most contradictory characters I have encountered in Beckett's drama. His entire existence is contradictory. He consciously voices his desire to have a relationship, but he cannot seem to act on this need. Contradiction is inherent in his creation of others because the responses he assigns them are necessarily his own. He declares at one point that he can no longer create his endless fictions, "I can't do it any more now!" (117), but he immediately does just that. Finally, there is the constant contradiction of the sea. Henry actively seeks out the sea and yet claims to detest

it. The soothing, beckoning sound of the sea contradicts Henry's fantasy of life: the thuds!

The three plays that deal with the relationship between language and music are among themselves repetitive in theme, often interpreted as the artist struggling with his own creativity. In Words And Music, Croak tries to align Music and Words into a unified representation of his internal definition. The repetitive thump of Croak's club is juxtaposed to the tapping of a conductor's baton and signals his repetitive efforts to coerce his "balms" (26) to "be friends" (23). I suggest that a variation occurs in this play when, at the end, Words and Music do finally combine to offer Croak "one glimpse of the wellhead" (32). Finally, I note that Croak's thumping of a club in his attempts to force Words to be creative, to match Music, seems a contradiction of the notion that creativity, specifically involving language, can be spontaneous.

Radio I relates the trials of a minimalist artist first begrudgingly allowing an audience of one to hear his art and then, fearful of his art's persistent decline in volume, seeks a doctor's help. This play is repetitive in the use of absolute language and uses repetitive phrasing and sentence structure: "How troubled you look," "How cold you are" (116). The character, He, notes one variation himself: the Music and Voice have come together, not usual, but are becoming progressively faint. He contradicts himself when he proclaims, "I ask no one to come here" (115), but soon

calls and begs the doctor to come. He always speaks in absolutes and yet He is sure of nothing except that he believes he is losing his ability to be creative.

The last play dealing with language and music is Cascando in which Opener seeks to coerce his Voice and Music into completing a fiction in order to allow him to stop, to rest. Opener repeatedly opens and closes Voice and Music, attempting to achieve closure. Ironically, although Opener obviously has a certain control over Voice and Music, he also repeatedly insists they are not his creations. Opener, like Croak, varies the seemingly endless futility of his actions by expressing pleasure with the progress of his music-backed fiction even though the fiction has yet to reach a conclusion. Opener betrays the contradiction of his existence by his refusal to acknowledge his own creations. He also consciously talks about emptiness and negation and yet his life's work is to bring Voice and Music together, to create something not empty, not negative.

The final radio play, Radio II, moves away from the question of language and music and seems to focus on a futile exercise in tyranny. Animator with the aid of Stenographer and Dick attempt to pull a linear fiction from their prisoner, Fox. We repeatedly hear the swish of a whip and the thump of a ruler; we are made aware from the opening of the play that this behavior has been repeated over and over, as Animator readies his crew and instructs Fox to note that it is the "same old team" (126). Several bits of



dialogue refer to past meetings among this group such as the rereading of "yesterday's results," and the renewal of previously outlined "exhortations" (127). In addition, everything Fox says is repeated by Animator and Stenographer as part of their interrogation. Animator, however, finally falsifies the proceedings, which we have been led to believe are always the same, in defiance of his own rules, in order to convince some unseen other(s) and himself that the team is making progress. The interrogators in Radio II who are actively seeking meaning contradict their goal by separating gesture from language. Animator says that "it's the word, the notion" (133) that they seek but then admits that they do not know exactly what word or notion they are seeking. Ironically, Animator, Stenographer, and Dick seem to be the all-powerful tormentors of Fox, but in the end Animator refers to their own lack of freedom, suggesting that they in turn are tormented.

Thus, the framework for identity exists in the radio plays as in the stage plays. In order to delve more completely into the identity of the characters I've chosen from Beckett's radio plays, I turn to Holland's The I in which he outlines a model for the investigation of identity. Based in part on Lichtenstein's theory that human identity is a theme with variations (35), Holland's model considers the mind

as an aesthetic object like a literary work or a piece of music, and therefore open to an analysis of themes and patterns through the assumption of organic unity which has proved useful since Aristotle. (49)

Holland notes that "we humans are constantly doing something new, but doing it in the same style or manner in which we have done everything before it" (51). Holland creates an equation: Identity = ARCing DEFTly. ARC stands for an agency, a consequence, and a representation. The agency is "the I that is the subject of sentences like 'I see,' 'I remember,' or 'I repress' . . . Identity, in this first sense, is the agent initiating the actions that systematically create identity" (34). Identity in the sense of a consequence, "is the 'I' that results because 'I see,' 'I remember,' or 'I repress'" (34). Finally, representation is "putting into words the dialectic of sameness and difference that is a human life" (34), either the self doing this or an onlooker. "Identity, then is paradoxical because the identity of each of us comes from an act of understanding that itself depends on identity" (50).

The representation of the agency and consequence are more thoroughly explained by the DEFTing. DEFT stands for defense, expectation, fantasy, and transformation: "expectations being met (or not), defenses being matched (or not), fantasy being pleasurably enjoyed (or painfully avoided)" (102). "DEFT is a way of exploring what people do in Winnicott's 'potential space' or in the philosophers' 'intersubjectivity'" (103).

In The I Holland exemplifies his theory, in part, by interpreting the identities of George Bernard Shaw and F. Scott Fitzgerald through their writings and biographies, real people with real lives to investigate. I, however, am considering characters in plays as real people. I do this, in part, because drama is the most mimetic of the arts. It consists of the stuff of life as we know and see it everyday: people talking, moving, communicating or not all within the same physically limited sphere, and human beings by their very nature/nurture are actors and actresses. Bruce Wilshire writes, "Theatre is a consummation of the main line of human development--a development that is theatre-like at crucial junctures" (4). Children learn, in part, by imitating the actions of others. Adults use defenses to shield what they feel are their real selves from external bombardment. The language of the stage permeates language off stage: "What a scene she made." "He is only acting out." "Don't act like a fool." "You are over-dramatizing the situation." "She is just pretending." Writers have compared life to the stage as far back as stage history exists. Yet "words we use so easily--'unreal,' 'real,' 'pretend,' 'see,' 'appear'--once filled the Greeks with wonder" (Wilshire 30). I assume, then, that the language of the theatre, the at-one-time jargon of a new art form, was introduced from the stage into our daily language. Human beings easily adapted stage language as their own because it fit. We can look to the theatre, as we look to

each other and ourselves, to mirror life, to aid us in self-definition for there is no other real way to see ourselves.

Wilshire notes:

There is [his emphasis] no transcendent or ideal observer . . . . Then, for us to put the mirror of theatre up to nature, and up to our common nature, may be the only [his emphasis] (or perhaps the only first way) to see certain features of our own looking faces and selves. (5)

Thus, I suggest that using a theory designed to aid in the evaluation of human identity can legitimately be used to discuss theatrical characters.

Treating characters as real people is not new: it does, however, go in and out of critical vogue. Psychoanalytic critics Murray Schwartz and David Willbern suggest that

where there is a literary . . . language of representation, we also find a historical concern with the nature and problem of individual existence in society, and hence some psychology of the individual, however schematic and rudimentary. (205)

In addition, I refer to Lacanian critic Mary Ragland (now Ragland-Sullivan) who when explaining her treatment of Rabelais' Panurge as a real character states,

I shall talk about Panurge as a real and believable character who attains an emotional reality because of his impact on the reader. Such a perspective does not conflict with stylistic and linguistic interpretations; rather, it makes a connection between processes of the human psyche and the text. (7)

It is, therefore, legitimate to treat literary characters as real people because that is one response readers, including myself, make and is subject to analysis and confirmation like any other reader response. Thus, I

will treat each character as a real person and reveal my representation of the identity theme and variations that I see manifested, keeping in mind that as I attempt to read a character's identity I do so through my own. This does not create an unusual problem for I believe, and it is fairly well accepted, that we are never able to be totally objective in any type of interpretation we do. I, as do all people, carry a bag of experience that both aids and hinders my interpretation, but also lends my own style to the job. Representing identity is, as Holland admits, "a very general theory that is in itself neither true nor false but a general organizing idea" (325) and, I add, an intriguing way to bring insight to fictional characters.

### Maddy

"I do not exist. The fact is well known."

Choosing to discuss Maddy Rooney from All That Fall was not a difficult decision for me. Maddy is one of Beckett's most complex dramatic characters. Maddy Rooney, "née Dunne, the big pale blur" (56), does exist despite her proclamations to the contrary. She is only too aware of her existence. What lends complexity to Maddy's character is the shift that I discern in her after Mr. Rooney enters the scene. On the first leg of her journey, Maddy initiates encounters with others only to quickly push them away. On the journey home, she aches to pull Dan into her world, her

self. The shift enables me not only to compare her actions before and after but also opens the door for an interpretation of why her character changes. The opening scenes reveal the repetitive nature of Maddy's relationships even though, ironically, we learn that her trip to the station to meet Dan is itself a breaking of her usual pattern of waiting at home. Maddy is aware of her repeatedly negative treatment of others but is unable to change. What she does not see is that her manner of transforming the responses she receives from others is itself the culprit. Her transformations all feed, support, her own feelings of inadequacy, of lost dreams, of non-existence. Yet when the blind Mr. Rooney appears, Maddy's transformations reveal that her fantasy about him (about love, about happiness) is still firmly embedded in her psyche. She transforms the positive, friendly responses of the people she encounters on her sojourn to the station into an affirmation of her sense of lack. Then, ironically, she struggles to transform the negative, standoffish responses she receives from Mr. Rooney into affirmations of her desire for fulfillment.

As Maddy sets out on her journey, her first contact, with Christy, sets the pattern for all her ensuing contacts. Maddy asks Christy about his family:

Maddy: How is your poor wife?

Christy: No better, Ma'am.

Maddy: Your daughter then?

Christy: No worse, Ma'am. (34)

Christy's obvious attempts to play down the negative are apparent in his compliant, yet terse, answers. He then changes the subject: "Nice day for the races, Ma'am" (34). Maddy, resigned to the fact that he will not reveal more details about the illnesses in his family, transforms this new subject to her needs: "No doubt it is. (Pause) But will it hold up?" (34) When Christy ignores this remark in order to inquire as to the Rooneys' need for dung, Maddy quickly tosses that off with "I'll ask the master" (35) and proceeds with her own concerns. A conversation already rife with questions, exposing Maddy's uncertainty, is quickly turned to a forum for the exposition of Maddy's pain:

Do you find anything . . . bizarre about my way of speaking? . . . I use none but the simplest words, I hope, and yet I sometimes find my way of speaking very . . . bizarre. (35)

What is bizarre is that Maddy expects a response to such a question from a simple man who merely wants to sell some dung. She breaks social rules of conduct, and consequently her answer is a fart from the hinny and a brush off from Christy. He ignores her lamentations, her questions, her provocative insinuations: "Why do you not climb up on the crest of your manure and let yourself be carried along? Is it that you have no head for heights?" (35-6) Christy tries to leave but his hinny won't budge. Maddy begins anew, first advising Christy about how to get the hinny moving but quickly relating the hinny, a sterile hybrid, to herself, shifting again to her own concerns and shuffling off down

the road, talking to herself about herself. After telling Christy to "give her a good welt on the rump," Maddy notes that "if someone were to do that for me I should not dally" (36). I note her use of "for me" not "to me"--"for me." Would she welcome an outside stimulus? However, as we soon see, Maddy rejects all attempts at cheering that she receives from others. She becomes convinced that the hinny will not move because of her. She thinks the hinny is looking at her: "Take her by the snaffle and pull her eyes away from me" (36).

Why does Maddy think the hinny is staring at her and refusing to move? Does Maddy bestow a sentient nature on the animal? Does she think the animal senses her own desire to stop and stops for her? Or does she think the animal senses something else, something done "so long ago" (37)? Guilt surfaces as Maddy remembers: "Sigh out a something something tale of things, Done long ago and ill done" (37). She moans, "How can I go on, I cannot" (37). She wants to "flop down flat," "a big fat jelly" and "never move again" (37). Maddy envisions herself as "a great big slop thick with grit and dust and flies" (37). She is excrement, to be "scoop[ed] . . . up with a shovel" (37). She hits the bottom then scoops herself up, declaring, "I am just a hysterical old hag . . . destroyed with sorrow and pining and gentility and church-going and fat and rheumatism and childlessness" (37). She then breaks down again: "Minnie! Little Minnie!" (37) She quickly revolves, however, into a



discussion of love, "love that is all I asked" (37). She rejects the notion that women want only affection, "a peck on the jaw . . . peck, peck, till you grow whiskers on you" (37). Maddy rides a roller coaster of emotion, one moment she longs for the inanimacy of death, like the "squashed" hen, "one minute pecking happy at the dung" (47) then-- "bang!--all her troubles over" (47-48). The next moment Maddy is begging Dan to "hold [her] tighter" (88), to affirm her existence.

Maddy's method of transforming response from the external world in order to match this wide range of emotion is becoming clear. Unable to keep Christy's responses on the pain of his family, so that she can relate them to her own pain, Maddy personifies the hinny, finding its gaze "awful" and bemoaning, "What have I done to deserve all this, what, what?" (37) I envision the large, brown eyes of a mule, innocent, almost pleading when they look at you or hard and piercing when under coercion. Maddy transforms the mules' gaze into an indictment for something "done long ago and ill done" (37). Whatever she did so long ago returns to haunt her, to accuse her and name her excrement or dead; but she is not lying in the middle of the road waiting "to be scoop[ed] . . . up" (37) and she is not dead, "all her troubles over" (48). She is still moving on. She tries to break from the past, tries to belittle her feelings but her mention of "childlessness" returns her to the hinny and, thus, to Minnie. Holland suggests, "All naming . . . by

substituting the world for the thing establishes both a presence and an absence" (88). What happened to Minnie? We know she is not physically there. Was Minnie the victim of something "done long ago and ill done"? Her absence is a constant source of Maddy's pain. Did Maddy kill her own child? Later when Mr. Rooney asks her, "Did you ever wish to kill a child, (74) does he rub up against Maddy's guilt? Did Minnie fall from a train, "under the wheels" (91)? If so, why? Maddy jumps from her broken cries of "Minnie!" (37) to "love, that is all I asked" (37). Did the hard, unresponsive Mr. Rooney, always ill by his own admission, "Did you ever know me to be well" (75), begrudge having a child? Did he withdraw even more from Maddy? Did Maddy think that without the child she would regain his love? Or did Mr. Rooney kill their child and Maddy doesn't know for sure? There was an accident, like the child on the train. Maddy's guilt, then, could be the guilt of a mother whose child succumbs while out of her sight. Naming Minnie names an absence that continues. This scenario is even more fetching to me, perhaps, because I do not want to believe that Maddy killed her child and find it easier to imagine Mr. Rooney doing it or, perhaps, because the child falling from the train coupled with Dan Rooney's question, "Did you ever wish to kill a child" (74), leads me to suspect him. What happened? We cannot know. Linda Ben-Zvi notes that Beckett "leaves his play unfinished in order to indicate the artificiality of forms that tie together all loose pieces,

and to suggest that true verisimilitude would demand that some questions go unresolved" ("Media" 29). In this case, because we cannot know the answers to some nagging questions about the past, I am led back to Maddy as she manifests herself now.

Maddy's meeting with Christy sets up the pattern that she follows in all her relationships, save with Mr. Rooney. Maddy meets an other, questions him or her about family problems, then the encounter degenerates into a one-sided vocalization of Maddy's state of mind. She consistently pulls people towards her then drives them away by trying to pull them in too close, by opening up and revealing the pain inside. Here is both an indictment against Maddy for ignoring the discomfort of those she speaks to and an indictment of the society in which she, in which we all, live, a society whose individuals expect us to keep our feelings locked away, to socialize on a superficial level of jollity. "How are you?" "Fine and you?" "Fine!" Maddy, however, is abrupt; she does not reach out gently to people, she grabs them, expecting them to instantly understand her problems. With Mr. Tyler, Maddy declares, "Dismount, for mercy's sake, or ride on" (38). She refuses his request to rest his hand on her shoulder with a curious paraphrasis which harkens back to her dislike of mere affection from her husband: "No, Mr. Rooney, Mr. Tyler I mean, I am tired of light old hands on my shoulders and other senseless places" (39). Maddy does not want "affection"; she wants "love"

(37), so her meetings with others become senseless exercises. She does not want their love, only their understanding of her need, her pain at the lack of love. Her need is too personal for the casual acquaintance. Mr. Tyler tries to keep the conversation light, up to and including alluding to his daughter's hysterectomy as the "removal" of "the whole . . . er . . . bag of tricks" (38). He cannot, however, ignore Maddy's increasing references to her own despondancy: "It is suicide to be abroad. But what is it to be at home, Mr. Tyler, what is it to be at home? A lingering dissolution" (39). Remember her negative response to Christy's suggestion that it is a "nice day" (34): "But will it hold up?" (34) Mr. Tyler, like Christy, tries to ignore her, wailing about his broken bicycle, wishing he had "shot by," "without a word" (40). Again he tries to cheer her and again she stubbornly refuses to be cheered. This encounter, like all the others, ends with Maddy wailing because she is not understood, "have you no respect for misery" (42), and the other person wishing he had not had the encounter at all.

I begin to forgive the people that Maddy meets. Maddy transforms every response into misery. She chases off Mr. Tyler, immune to his offers of help, slipping once again into parapraxis: "Will you get along with you, Mr. Rooney, Mr. Tyler I mean, will you get along with you now and cease molesting me?" (42) This slip stands in contradiction to her manner of dealing with Mr. Rooney and possibly betrays a

deep rooted feeling of ambivalence toward even him. At this point, the rebuff reveals what Maddy wants right now: She wants to cry; she wants to mourn, to fall down, "to be in atoms" (43).

The repetition of Maddy's encounters continues. Maddy deteriorates. Mr. Slocum, her "old admirer" (44) stops for her in a car. After the preliminary family questions, Slocum is, like the others, sorry he stopped. In a variation on the preceding verbal barrage, it is the physical barrage of hoisting Maddy into the car that makes Slocum "gaz[e] straight before [himself] . . . into the void" (47). In an ironic juxtaposition, Slocum describes his car:

All morning she went like a dream and now she is dead . . . Perhaps if I were to choke her. (He does so, presses the starter. The engine roars.) She was getting too much air. (47)

Shades of welting the hinny or slapping Maddy on the rump to get her going (36). Is Maddy getting too much air? We know from her initial meeting with her husband, Dan, that it is not usual for her to be out: "Why are you here?" (67) Maddy has broken her norm because she "wanted to give [Dan] a surprise. For [his] birthday" (67). Based on Maddy's reactions to other's attempts at kindness, I can understand why she rarely ventures forth. To me, it is as if Maddy has one dream left--Dan--and her encounters with others only remind her how fragile that dream is.

People have tried to be kind and helpful to Maddy all day, but her need to pull them into her and have them reflect the pain she feels, leads her to the opposite goal; she distances them. Her quickness to admonish others for perceived slights in the face of their politeness becomes ironic when Mr. Rooney arrives, for if anything he is rude and he does not even try to explain why. Yet Maddy only sympathizes with him, cajols him, accepts his barbs. She asks him to kiss her hello. He responds, "Kiss you? In public? . . . Have you taken leave of your senses?" (67) He is not pleased with her surprise, only angry that she did not "cancel the boy? Now we shall have to give him a penny" (68). He is morose, telling Jerry, "Come for me on Monday, if I am still alive" (68). He is consistantly negative (shades of Maddy in the first half): "We shall fall into the ditch" (69). He is mean, calling Maddy "two hundred pounds of unhealthy fat!" (73) He feeds Maddy's insecurities: "Do you know, Maddy, sometimes one would think you were struggling with a dead language" (80). To all of this Maddy responds with affection: "Put your arm around me" (69); "Oh, Dan! It will be like old times!" (69) She is positive: "Now we are in safety and a straight run home" (72). She is nurturing: "What is the matter, Dan? Are you not well?" (75) She tries to be attentive: "No no, I am agog, tell me all" (80).

There is more than just obstinacy and subservience here. The conversation between Maddy and Dan is the most

cohesive and complex set forth in any Beckett play. Besides the little jabs and idiosyncracies betrayed by Dan and Maddy's seeming evenness of response, the two run the gamut of their lives. We learn how Dan feels about work and home. We learn about their past and present together. We see that the two often are closely communicating their feelings, their fears, their dreams. "I feel very cold and faint" (79). "Things are very dull to-day" (81). They are a couple, interrelated on many levels. Is this the satisfaction that Maddy receives? We know that Dan does not give her the physical attention she craves. Perhaps, the mere dialogue has become enough to sustain and feed her fantasy of a perfect union. She lost the union of mother and child; she now looks for the replication of this union with her man-child. In fact, much of her response strikes me as motherly. Besides affection in the face of Dan's often child-like pouting, Maddy is at times condescending: Dan: "Well! That is what you call well!" Maddy: "We are down. And little the worse" (71). She chides him, as when she is trying to find out what happened on the train: "But you must know! You were on it!" (73) She teaches him how to deal with adversity: "Let us turn and face them. Threaten them with your stick" (74). With Dan, Maddy is often able to stave off reality by using him to support her fantasy of oneness with an other. In retrospect then, she is unable to deal with the trivialities of casual acquaintance. She needs diversion and "Hello, how are you"

does not work. Dan provides the personal response, steady and firm, that Maddy needs in order to avoid living in a dreary past with her dead child.

Maddy observes, "We are alone" (76), but they are together in their aloneness. She sees for Dan; he keeps her dream alive. She says, "just cling to me and all will be well" (71). They both "join in wild laughter" (88) when Maddy cites, "'The Lord upholdeth all that fall and raises up all those that be bowed down'" (88). Perhaps, they do consciously feel that theirs is a miserable existence. Like Didi and Gogo, however, Maddy and Dan stand side by side, "Let us turn and face them" (74), against a "tempest of wind and rain" (91), against what they perceive as a threatening world. Maddy exclaims, "Hold me tighter, Dan!" (88) Despite the news of the child falling (or being pushed?) from the train, despite "the themes of death and decay" (Ben-Zvi, "Media" 28), I rest easy, envisioning Maddy and Dan hanging up their wet clothes, donning dressing-gowns, and sitting in front of a fire with Maddy reading and the blinds drawn.

Maddy has one fantasy, to pull Dan into her where she once held Minnie. Therefore, when she is with Dan (and only with Dan), she needs all the positivism she can muster in order to keep this one fantasy alive. Thus, she refuses to waste her positive side in relationships with others, with whom she only shares the pain she struggles to keep from overcoming her relationship with Dan. Maddy uses multiple defenses aimed toward the maintenance of her identity. Her



aggressive behavior towards others often involves acting out: "Behavior . . . [that] disrupts social adjustment" (Bibring 64).<sup>1</sup> Maddy asks about others' families but in a self-centered way does so only to introduce her own pain. She is so dramatic, pun intended, at times: "If you see my poor blind Dan . . . . Say to him, Your poor wife. . . simply went back home" (41-42). Therefore, I sense another of her defenses is affectualization in which "feeling is unconsciously intensified" in order to protect herself from what she perceives as threats from the external (Bibring 64). Finally, in Maddy's encounters with Dan, from whom I believe most of us might feel the real threat comes, she falls back on compliance: "avoidance of issues by passive surrender" (Bibring 65). I am not forgetting that Maddy does argue with Dan, arguments that as I've noted resemble most the admonitions of a caretaker, but Maddy quickly acquiesces. In the National Public Radio broadcast of All That Fall (April, 1989), I found that Billie Whitelaw's portrayal of Maddy perfectly matched my own interpretation of Maddy's defenses. In Maddy's encounters with others, not Dan, Whitelaw begins loud and stringent but always ends, as Maddy's spirit fails, in a soft, cloying whine that sounds almost affected. Once Dan appears, Maddy's voice takes on a different quality: softer, compliant--even her whines are less affected. I feel, here is Dan's Maddy and probably Minnie's, a woman who has not lost all hope. Maddy's defenses with others protect her from having to realize the

world is still moving around her. She wants to hold others still, as still as she feels when Dan is gone. Yet when Dan returns, Maddy pulls him to her and reawakens her fantasy of union. A hinny with no chance of reproducing from within, Maddy seeks to reproduce Dan as the absent Minnie.

Possibly, we all realize she can never achieve her fantasy, but with the blinds drawn and Maddy reading to Henry by the fire, I sense that her horrible sense of absence is staved off, her fantasy, for a time, realized.

### Henry

"Thuds, I want thuds!"

I have never received the same sense of a fantasy achieved when hearing or reading Embers. In fact, whenever I read my copy of this play, I laugh out loud as I reach the section when Henry is complaining to Ada (whom he recreates, possibly from the dead) that his father (whom he definitely recreated from the dead) "does not answer any more" (115). I laugh because during an earlier reading I became caught up in how absurd I found Henry's behavior and cynically jotted in the margin "he's a nut!", in effect dismissing him. I believe that I dismissed him because, whether heard or read, I find Henry to be the most contrary of Beckett's characters. He does seem to consciously realize what he needs; he says it all the time: "Nothing, all day nothing" (121). "Just to be with me" (95). "All day all night

nothing" (121). "Be with me" (118). "Not a sound" (121). What he says he really wants, however, is thuds! He says, "I want thuds!" (112) I interpret his fantasy as one of complete independence, of absolutes, of a linear world in which the unexpected never happens, fathers do not drown, wives do not stop loving you, children are cherished assets. Yet Henry's father did drown, his wife Ada did stop loving him, and he rues the day they had a child, just as he fantasizes that his father wished he was never born. Henry's world is filled with the unexpected and the undesired. Unlike Maddy, who must transform the responses she elicits from the external, Henry does not need to transform responses because he has created all the others who respond, except for the sea, his arch nemesis. The sea, "audible throughout" (95) whenever there is a pause, keeps luring him into its external turmoil, internal silence, luring him with its "lovely peaceful gentle soothing sound" (112) away from the thuds!

Henry is a man terrified by the room, womb, tomb and their ultimate metaphor, the sea that lured his father then took him away. Henry rants throughout the play that he needs somebody, "You needn't speak. Just listen. Not even. Be with me" (118). Yet, he has obviously driven his loved ones off, "what turned her against me" (102), with such exhortations as "Stone! . . . That's life!" (112) His incessant talking to himself: "Do you know what [Addie] said to me once . . . she said, Mummy, why does Daddy keep on

talking all the time?" (111) He is drawn to the sea, to the (m)other, who threatens engulfment, drowning, a return to the womb. I am reminded of psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow and her hypotheses concerning the outcomes of the oedipus complex. She notes that "a boy has engaged, and been required to engage, in a more emphatic individuation and a more defensive firming of experienced ego boundaries" (167). Henry's preoccupation with his father strikes me as oedipal. He wants, in some sense to be the father, but his father was swallowed up by the sea, emphasizing further Henry's need to individuate. Henry is struggling with the fact that he overindividuated. Henry declares, "I'm like you [the father] in that, cannot stay away from it, but I never go in" (97). Henry only wants to "be near it" (97), to be near the father, which is in itself ironic because he cannot stand the sound of the sea, always "talking, oh just loud enough to drown it" (97). His constant monologue is his effort to "drown" the sea in order to keep it from drowning him as it did his father. He is determined to maintain his distance, his independence, from the all-encompassing sea. Chodorow further states, "Male denial of dependence and of attachment to women helps to guarantee both masculinity and performance in the world of work" (190). Henry's determination to remain separate from the sea strikes me as representative of his fantasy of independence and is indicative of his failure to form satisfying relationships with, however, men as well as women (note the

Bolton/Holloway fiction). His emphasis has until recently been on his work, on the creation of his stories.

Henry says, "I usen't to need anyone, just to myself, stories" (97). However, the endless Bolton/Holloway fiction he tells reveals even further his fear of engulfment. Bolton is waiting in his house in the dark, "no light, only the light of the fire" (97). Outside is a "white world" (99), "snow everywhere" (98), snow that entombs, muffles sound, rounds the edges. He has called for a friend who is also his doctor, Holloway, to come to him but when Holloway arrives Bolton is mute. The fire has turned to embers and the snow, like the sea, threatens to extinguish these last embers of Bolton's life. Yet, he can only say, "'Please! PLEASE!'" (99) when Holloway threatens to turn right around and leave. Bolton is trapped in a "white world, great trouble, not a sound, only the embers" (100) but he cannot reach out to Holloway. Henry also feels trapped on the edge of the sea unable to reach out, knowing he needs someone but capable only of recreating others from his past just like he creates and recreates the fiction. Real others are like the sea to him; they threaten loss of separateness; they surround him, lull him, lure him away from the thuds.

Henry does not want to be alone. That is why he recreates others with whom to talk. How would he fare with real others? We know that he fared ill with his father, his wife, and his child. He states that for years the stories sufficed, "till the need came on me, for someone, to be with

me, anyone, a stranger, to talk to, imagine he hears me" or "for someone who . . . knew me, in the old days, anyone, to be with me, imagine he hears me, what I am, now" (100). As surely, however, as he openly acknowledges his need for a relationship, he denies it, "No good either" (100), relating that need to the threatening "white world, not a sound" (101). His acceptance of an other would be to enter the white world, enter the sea and drown. Merging and fusion are his great fears; loneliness and hopelessness are the consequence of these fears. Henry receives no response from the external because he does not arc out to it. Perhaps he stopped because his early responses were unsatisfying. The only memory of his childhood that Henry relates is of a time when his father called him "a washout, that's all you are, a washout!" (102) Perhaps that confrontation started Henry on his move away from what he perceived as a painful external world, a world that he fears will wash him out.

Thus, having withdrawn, Henry receives no response, good or bad. To defend against the misery a lack of response brings, he creates others, safe others he can uncreate if they become too threatening. His defense is magical thinking: "the treating of thinking as if it were doing . . . . reality testing is given up. Magical thinking is used illogically as a way of avoiding danger or fulfilling needs" (Bibring 69). Henry's father does not answer him any more. Henry, as Ada, suggests, "You wore him out living and now you are wearing him out dead" (115). I

feel it is more that Henry has excluded him from his fictions, his magical thinking, because of the threat his father exemplifies. The others he creates act not simply to pander to his ego. They criticize; they reestablish the faults he knows he has; they exaggerate when he would. He assumes he can magically fix his flaws by merely hearing his own recreation of them. Ada seems real until I realize that we never hear her movements and all she talks about is Henry and other people only as they concern Henry. She speaks of Addie's need for her father, yet we know that Henry often tried to get rid of her; she disturbed his solitary needs. Ada speaks of Henry's father, how he used to sit "looking out to sea" (117); the reference here is clear. Henry imitates his father. Does he think that his father conquered the sea for years only to succumb in the end? The sitting by the sea "comes close to [a] ritual" (Bibring 69). A ritual of thinking, not doing. Is he, Henry, proving his worth by staying near the sea without being engulfed? Henry never enters the water, never allows himself to become involved in the rolling cycle of life; therefore, what is he proving? It would seem nothing. Henry fantasizes that people do not intertwine in relationships; they simply thud together like stones, like he did with his father. His fantasy has destroyed his sense of value, his sense of self, but he clings to it, ironically noting the consequences: life holds nothing for him, "nothing this evening,"

"tomorrow . . . plumber at nine, then nothing," "ah yes, the waste" (121).

Several times Henry creates the sound of horses and comments on horses in general. The first time is when he imagines he is with his father. He shouts for "Hooves!" (96); they are heard. Henry comments, "Train it to mark time! Shoe it with steel and tie it up in the yard, have it stamp all day!" (96) He calls forth the horses again after recreating Ada, then notes, "Could a horse be trained to stand still and mark time, with its four legs?" (105) He summons them again while imagining the sounds of Addie taking riding lessons, but makes no comment. Why horses? Does Henry see himself as an old horse, trained to mark time in his youth by his father, in his middle age by his wife? Is he the horse that little Addie rides? He was certainly her reluctant sire. Do the sound of the horses, coming as they do whenever he has recreated an other symbolize his own flight from real others? Or is he the "ten ton mammoth" (96) who, tamed and trained in life, comes "back from the dead," shod "with steel" in order to "tramp the world down" (96)? Henry does/is all of the above. He gallops away from that "sucking" (113) vision of life. Henry feels driven, ridden by a world that demands attention. His process, then, involves a refusal to pull anyone into his circle for fear that his self will be drowned. He, therefore, only magically creates others, to give him a sense of function and interaction with the world, and creates the responses



that justify his holding them away. Henry wishes he could trample the world down into a absolute, non-fluctuating reality, but Henry also knows he cannot. Henry must be satisfied to exist with "not a living soul" (113) around, for he cannot overcome his fear of life long enough to live it.

### Croak

"To whence one glimpse/Of that wellhead."

Beckett's next three plays for radio move from the relative sense of reality found in All That Fall and Embers to ultra-contrived worlds populated by creators and their creations, or for my purposes, individuals and projected identities. The introduction of music as characters in these plays reminds me of Holland's interpretation of Lichtenstein's identity theme: "I can understand another person as living out changes and variations on a persistent core just as a musician might play out an infinity of variations on a single melody" (35). In these plays we find individuals trying to align or fine-tune the alignment of words and music, which are variously seen as internal and/or external to the creator himself. Words And Music<sup>2</sup>, like the two plays that follow, by introducing language and music as separate characters in effect isolates a third character, assumed to be their creator, from his creation. In choosing a protagonist from the three characters in this play (Croak,

Words, Music) I first thought Words had to be my choice for mere abundance of material. The closer I feel to this work, however, the more I sense that Croak is hero, director, and artist. Croak is the primary identity arcing out, striving to transform the Words and Music into a satisfying echo of his sense of self. For me, Croak's dilemma is clear. Music represents an inner flow of feeling that the external Words tries to express but often cannot. Croak's desire is to unite the Words and Music, to reach for one brief moment, "one glimpse/Of that wellhead" (32), a union of feeling and articulation.

As Croak enters, presaged by his "shuffling carpet slippers" (23), the dilemma unwinds. Words declares, "At last!" and with a final "Hsst" (23) to Music looks to Croak for direction. Both Music and Words have been tuning up. I hear the discord of the orchestra tuning; the words tuning up is a different matter--and somehow even more irritating. The tuning of an orchestra triggers my ear to prepare for the mathematical precision to come, like hearing an orchestra in the pit before the curtain rises. The tuning of the words, however, does not necessarily foreshadow such harmony. I am reminded of times when a note of discord in the opening of a lecture signaled more chaos to come, signaled my ultimate inability to understand. Thus from my own experience, my expectations for Words is that he might continue in a discordant vein. If Music, even when tuning, represents the internal and expected repetition that offers

Croak a sense of continuity, Words represents the external chaos of a language incapable of soothing, language that must be pounded with a club in order to achieve lyricism while Music's precision of expression is achieved by the tap of a baton. Words, for much of the play, epitomizes the difference between repetition and redundancy, repetition without purpose, "exceeding what is necessary or natural" (The American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. redundancy): "Sloth is of all the passions the most powerful passion and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of sloth" (23). Sloth is "the mode in which the mind is most affected and indeed in no mode is the mind more affected than in this" (23). Such repetition does not strike me as purposeful in the sense that it is designed to create emphasis, to teach, or to please the ear. This repetition strikes me as designed to be discordant. David Warrilow's rendering of Words, in the National Public Radio broadcast (April, 1989), supports my feeling. He recites the lines rapidly, without inflection, and without pauses except when he is interrupted "imploring[ly]" (23) by Music. I hear a character who, unable to come up with anything new, repeats himself just to keep talking. I hear redundancy.

Yet both of these two characters, Words and Music, are Croak's "comforts" (23); he admonishes them to "be friends" (23). How are they both comforts? Morton Feldman's composition of the music in the 1989 broadcast makes it easy to hear how Music is Croak's comfort.<sup>3</sup> When Croak greets

Music, "Bob" (23), the "humble muted adsum" (23) fills me with a sense of comfort uncomparable to Word's (Joe) "humble," "My Lord" (23). Both Words and Music are directed to be humble and yet the spoken humility of "My Lord" brings too many other "humble" characters to mind, Dickens' Uriah Heep, for one; whereas, I find I can relax into the music with no thoughts of duplicity. Music is Croak's internal fantasy of his self, precise, rational and yet ultimately capable of expressing pure emotion and Words is the slippery external that Croak seeks to transform into his fantasy, bring into alignment with his own sense of balance and harmony. Once these two elements are pulled into a symbiotic union, Croak would be comforted. As Maurice Beja suggests, when the wellhead is attained, "The distinction between Words and Music will disappear" (cassette). Thus, Words and Music are his comforts in anticipation of a fantasy fulfilled. To fulfill this fantasy, Croak's defense is represented by the club he carries; the club is only used to bring the Words into the Music. The "thump of club" (24) shuts Words up, forcing him either to attempt linguistic alignment with Croak's present theme or to listen to Music's interpretation of the theme: listen and learn.

The club as defense makes better sense once I isolate the type of defense such an aggressive, albeit benign, threat exemplifies for me. I am first reminded of what Mahler, et al. note concerning children going through the process of separation and individuation, during which time

one of the most important developmental tasks of the evolving ego is that of coping with the aggressive drive in the face of the gradually increasing awareness of separateness. (226)

A child with a strong primitive ego learns "to use neutral or neutralized aggression in the service of the ego" which "helps him to accept separateness" (226). The notion of neutralized aggression is what interests me here. I suggest that Croak's banging of the club is just that--neutralized aggression--implying that when Croak first struggled with the need to be at one with an other and his equal need to be separate, he had a strong ego in place but not strong enough to totally subdue aggressive energy. Mahler suggests, however, that such energy should not be totally suppressed (226). Thus, I see Croak, a basically healthy individual, carrying this neutralized aggression into adulthood and applying it to what in the present time he perceives as a like situation. For surely the first time a child senses that the mother is not a part of the child's own internal universe, the child views the mother as not reliable, as chaotic in her ability to come and go at will. Croak is responding by trying to link the internal and external, by trying to force Words to match the emotional exactitude of Music, to force Words as he once tried to force his mother to echo his internal needs. I would note that such motivation on Croak's part is not conscious but plays from his unconscious fantasy concerning a reunion of the symbiotic world he saw split in childhood. In this sense,

Croak's defense can be seen as acting out, which "may occur through the omitting or impulsive exaggeration of a normally adjustive, appropriate behavior" (Bibring 64). Croak's club is heard in conjunction with the rap of a conductor's baton, "a normally adjustive, appropriate behavior," of which the thumping club is an "impulsive exaggeration." Croak's impatience with Words leads him to turn the rap of Music's baton into the thump of a club. Both efforts are geared towards adjustment; the club is merely more insistent--more assertive--perhaps even more desperate.

Psychoanalytically, the adjective desperate works. Croak has failed to accept the separation between the me and not me. He wants the internal and external to meet and is not satisfied with their creative mingling in the potential space between the two. So, like a thwarted child, who despairs of relinking himself with the (m)other, Croak flails out at Words both desperately and fruitlessly, for the contradictory gap between the internal and external cannot be bridged on any permanent basis. Aesthetically, however, Croak's defiant beating of the club can be likened to the creative process itself. Music, with its mathematic precision, can be coerced into fitting one's mood by the rap of a baton. Language, however, with its total lack of precision, its infinite connotations, its metaphorical foundation must be pummeled and prodded into even an echo of the man inside. I, of course, have to fall back on my own suggestion of language's lack by explaining that Music and

Words are in this instance themselves metaphorical. Certainly, we have all seen a conductor (if only in cartoons) rant and rave and break his baton in an attempt to coerce his vision of a musical piece from an orchestra. In the reverse, there are many gifted writers who have sworn that they do little if any revision of their original manuscripts, writers who seemingly write straight from that wellhead. Here, however, Music is, metaphorically, emotional essence and Words emotional chaos.

Bringing Words and Music into alignment about love with a club seems a contradiction at the outset, and appropriately does not work. The aggressive thump of the club only exacts more redundant tripe from Words: "Love is of all the passions the most powerful passion and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of love" (24). Does Croak's very defense, the club, preclude his ability to balance Words and Music over the theme of love? Have Croak's own thwarted expectations concerning love made him incapable of reaching harmony with such a passion? Croak manages to evoke "love and soul music" from Music but only evokes a semantic struggle from Words: "Do we mean love, when we say love? . . . Soul, when we say soul?" (25) The indictment against language is clear but the indictment against using a club to evoke eloquence from Words about this gentle passion that, however, "more than all the cursed deadly . . . so moves the soul" (25) is equally clear.

Croak, sensing failure, introduces a new theme: age. Here the thump of the club seems appropriate, for who among us does not rail and wish to beat off the inevitable passing of time, the inevitable failure of our biological orga(ni)sms. In an effort to appease his expectations on this theme, Croak becomes more vigorous in his use of the club and verbally offensive, moving from cajolingly calling Words and Music his "balms" (26) to calling them "dogs" (26). Croak groans as Words strives to match Music, strives to sing in harmony. Music obliges by offering "suggestion[s] for following" and Words "tr[ies] to sing" (27). Words, however, still fights Music even as he tries to follow. However, soon Words and Music seem to start working together; Croak's interruptions slacken off. Perhaps on the theme of age, the club is working.

As Croak arcs out to his world, his fantasy involves a desire to pull the external inside of himself, to retrieve the language that, in seeming defiance, joins the external as it leaves his lips, perhaps even as it forms in his conscious. He expects that he can simply transform the external to internal and when frustrated resorts to the neutralized aggression of his club. The question in Words and Music is does Croak see his fantasy achieved? Can he transform Words' words into a revelation "of that wellhead" (32); is there a satisfactory consequence? In Beckettian tradition, the answers to these questions are never made clear. Whether or not Croak is satisfied or even more



frustrated remains unclear. I will lean to one side and suggest that Croak does get, in ironic fashion, "one glimpse/Of that wellhead" (32), a glimpse of what Morton Feldman calls "the universal," "the subject that haunts most of us": age (cassette). During the theme of age, a stage direction notes that Words "change[s] to poetic tone" (31). From this point until just before the end, Words and Music work together with no conflict. Music offers discreet suggestions and Words tries to sing. Music becomes increasingly "confident" (31) in his invitations and Words ultimately creates a corresponding poetic opus which to me points toward the final moments of aging:

Then down a little way  
Through the trash  
Towards where  
All dark no begging  
All giving no words  
No sense no need (31-2)

Teetering on the brink of death, we reach that one final moment of looking from where we came to the dark unknown beyond our bodies' lives. The struggle to make sense of an often senseless world is over. With no further need to beg for response, we have passed through the trash and looking back, because we surely cannot look forward, we behold "one glimpse/Of that wellhead" (32), one realization that our lives are shaped by our longing to surmount the trash, to understand without struggle, to attain a satisfactory response. Feldman calls this struggle to understand standing "in the shadows . . . holding the hot potato which

is life" (cassette). As Words finishes his revelation, he pauses, "shocked" (32) and gasps "My Lord!" (32) Croak drops the club and slowly shuffles away. At this point, I could suggest that once again sensing failure, Croak simply leaves. What I hear is the fall of the club, the dropping of his defense, as Croak transforms the words of Words into a satisfying revelation of his internal fantasy. Croak leaves, for, ironically, by integrating Words and Music over the theme of age, he has seen his own demise, his own aging and ultimate movement from the known, the light, into the unknown, the dark. Thus, Croak's achievement of a "glimpse/Of that wellhead" brings satisfaction in a negative sense. As Croak sees for one brief moment an undistilled replication of his internal emotions, he disappears, he shifts. Such a movement can also indicate what Holland notes as our inability to know our self with certainty, for any length of time: "I know my own I, as I can never know yours, yet like a dim star, like an after-image, if I turn my vision toward it, it disappears" (x). Croak saw a vision of his fantasy come true, a brief glimpse of his core identity through Words alignment with Music. Croak leaves; the vision disappears.

### Opener

"I open and close."

In Cascando, a second Beckett radio play that combines words and music, there is a shift. Far from being able to simply reapply the fantasy I interpret as dominating Croak in Words And Music, I find here a different fantasy. As with Words And Music, however, I again concentrate on the character I envision as the orchestrator, Opener. If Croak sees Music as the representation of his inner flow of feelings and Words as the hard, stubborn representation of the external, Opener treats both Voice and Music as externals, declaring, "There is nothing in my head" (13). While Croak fantasizes that he can pull the external into the internal, thus creating a symbiotic sense of self, Opener fantasizes that if the external Voice and Music can simply create the "right" (9) fiction, he will be free to "rest . . . then sleep . . . no more stories . . . no more words" (9). Opener's defense against the world from which he senses no satisfactory response is a denial, a pushing out, of the internal by projecting the internal outwards.

In the opening of the play, Opener seems to have introjected the external and is recreating others through Voice and Music. Opener says "I open" (9) and Voice begins. Then Opener says "And I close" (10); Voice stops. "I open the other" (10); Music begins. Opener continues in like vein opening both, closing both. Even before Opener

emphatically insists, "They say, It's in his head. It's not" (12), the plethora of negatives spoken by Voice, suggesting emptiness, give me pause: "What's in his head . . . a hole," "a hollow," "no more trees . . . no more bank," "not enough," "no more cover," "not a soul" (11). I sense that both Voice and Music are representative of an emptiness, a lack of internal identity on Opener's part, a lack, however, that he has created himself through a belief that he can push the inside of himself to the outside. Even though he is, without question, the instigator of the gushes of Voice and the rushes of Music, Opener will not, cannot, admit that he creates them. For how can he? "There is nothing in [his] head" (13). He is "hollow," empty, unable to "lift his head" (13) and see the "lights" (13) of his own creations.

Yet I pause again. For the Opener uses the first person. In several of Beckett's stage plays I noted that characters who had totally lost their sense of self always speak or create others who speak about the character in the second or, more often, third person. In That Time, Listener creates three others who speak for and about him, in the second and third person, one voice even consciously noting that Listener never uses I. Mouth in Not I is almost hysterical in her avoidance of the first person. A similar refusal permeates the soliloquy of Speaker in A Piece Of Monologue. So, if Opener truly has no sense of self, why does he use the first person? He notes that others suggest

that Voice and Music are "in his head" (13). He has heard this so often that he declares, "I don't protest any more, I don't say any more, There is nothing in my head" (13). He does not "answer any more" (13): "I open and close" (13). By denying that the Voice and Music come from inside of him, he denies his creativity. When he says, "I open," what is it he opens? Some box of words and music that sits outside himself? I think this is exactly what he wants to feel. It seems too condescending to suggest that he is merely being humble about his talent. In projection "certain unacceptable inner impulses and their derivatives [are perceived] as if they were outside the self" (Bibring 69). Does Opener feel that his creative impulses are somehow unacceptable? Or do they become unacceptable once he initiates them and, therefore, he determines to undo them by denying they belong to him? His creations, once outside of himself, belong to the rest of the world, to the external; thus, to protect himself against an overpowering sense of loss he denies that he creates them to begin with. I hear the Opener complain:

They say, That is not his life, he does not live on that. They don't see me, they don't see what my life is, they don't see what I live on, and they say, That is not his life, he does not live on that. (13)

What is this all about? Is he the artist and they the critics? They hear his creations and suppose to know him. His denial of his creations, then, becomes a denial of the critics' trespassing, violating, his inner space. Instead

of being satisfied with the fresh water that springs from that wellhead, the critics cross over the potential space and attempt to probe deeper into the source itself. This is a violation of Opener's fantasy of internal separateness, his refusal to admit that he lets any part of himself out. When Opener arcs out to the world, the response he receives forces him to close up, to reject his own arcing in order to protect his sense of self. He has transformed the world's response into a direct threat.

Unlike in Words and Music where Words and Music often seem in direct conflict, in Cascando from the beginning Voice and Music are working together. William Kraft, the composer for the National Public Radio broadcast (1988), declares that his music is not representational, has an "abstract quality" which he feels is best suited to Beckett's text (cassette). Yet when I first heard Alvin Epstein's rushed, staccato rendering of Voice, the music that followed seemed to match and to easily echo representational images of the preceding hustle, the almost desperate need to move rapidly, like a high-speed train rushing by or the lone commuter fighting to move faster than the others in stalled traffic. I sense urgency but for what is only clear because of Opener's desire to put an end to it, to execute the closure of his art and, thereby, achieve an internal closure. He believes that by pushing his internal outward and witnessing closure, he can rest, no longer fight the need to protect himself from an external

threat that, ironically, he refuses to acknowledge as an internal and ongoing struggle.

Therefore, I suggest that Opener's constant denial of the internal, his vehement declarations of emptiness and negation, are the defenses by which he protects and prolongs his fantasy of internal unity and external separation. His conscious fantasy is that one last creation, "the right one" (9), the perfect external union of Voice and Music will release him from the need to open and close. In his deepest thoughts, however, he knows that "it is the month of May" (9) and his dialogue with the external will not be over until his death in December. He cries, "I have lived on it . . . pretty long" (13); he will continue; continuing is both his reality and his consequence. He wishes life were linear with definite openings and closings, like "two outings. Then the return . . . To the village" (17), "by the only road that leads there" (18). Yet he knows that linearity is just "an image, like any other" (18) and that life revolves from birth to death in dizzying cycles of opening, creativity, and closing, thought: "come on . . . come on" (19). Yet he builds a wall between himself and the world and by denying that anything from within can penetrate the wall protects himself from penetration from without.

# He

"I meet my debts."

The main character in Radio I<sup>4</sup> is, like Opener and Croak, dealing with his own creativity. In this play, however, I note two separate occasions of arcing on the protagonist's part--two different conditions under which He arcs/responds and transforms response from the external. By investigating each separately I suggest that he first withholds from the world, claiming autonomy, then reaches outward to pull in help. He is the minimalist artist only grudgingly giving the bare necessities to his audience one minute but fantasizing, in horror, the next minute that his minimal art is disappearing altogether and that he will be left with nothing to give. Ironic, but I feel fitting.

Homan suggests that "Radio I is a miniature play in two acts divided by 'Sound of curtains violently drawn, first one, then the other, clatter of heavy rings along the rods'" (Theaters 186). He further notes, "It is also something of a schizophrenic play, with the artist, 'He,' initially showing a confident public facade and then the neurotic private side of his personality" (186). The two acts reveal two ways in which He arcs out to the world. In the first part, a second character She has come to his theater "to listen" (115). That is all She is allowed to do, listen, and that she does so without benefit of heat, light, or clarification. He will not make it easy. In this theater



there are no amenities, no attempts to coddle the audience. He declares, "I ask no one to come here" (115) but if someone comes He "meet[s his] debts" (115). In what sense does He owe the audience, the world? Has She paid her dime? Possibly. Does his use of the external world in the development of his creations put him in debt to it? Do we not all feel a need to show who we are to the external world that partially created us? Is this the paying of a debt? Debts imply responsibility and in turn interdependence. However grudgingly the artist reveals his work, the revelation itself is an act of interdependence with his world. "Come look what I have created for, with, or about you because it does not exist without you"; "Come see what I have created for or about my self because I don't exist without you."

Yet, He maintains a begrudging attitude toward giving of himself. He withholds and, the question of debt aside, He responds to her eager anticipation and kind solicitudes with gloom, terse absolutes of negation, and even hostility. His expectation is that the external world accept without question what little he deems to put forth. In his role as artist, his responses to her, his audience, are as minimal as his art. All he admits, rather stoically, is that the words and music go on "without cease" (115) and that they have "become a need" (119). He close guards that need, however, as if the creations are still a part of his physical person. She has a need, too, a need to understand,

become part of his creation. He sees this need as a threat, an attempt on her part to violate the physical man behind the art. Thus, like Opener, he defends himself. Yet unlike Opener, who denies his own creations in order to protect himself from the external world, He stands behind an impenetrable facade, that of the long suffering artiste, deigning to show his work to an oafish, illiterate public. His instructions to her are condescending, "To the right, Madam, to the right" (117). His answers to her questions, when he answers, are terse, "No" (118), or equally condescending, "One cannot describe them, Madam" (119). Ironically, as adamantly as he withholds he does not, I think, succeed in thwarting her eagerness. Although she finds his art "unimaginable" (115) and "inconceivable" (118) and finds him "cold" (116), She leaves still hoping for a glimpse of understanding, even if that glimpse must come from "the house [Beckett's emphasis] garbage" (119) which I suggest He catches her peeking into as she leaves.

The ruse of his defense becomes clear to me after She leaves, and He closes the curtains. He has acted as if her exhortations of "Louder!" (118) are merely another example of her lack of understanding, based on his perception of her responses, as exceeding his expectations in a negative and threatening manner. Yet, we soon find that even he is worried that the words and music are not louder. In a medium that is totally audio, I easily relate losing the sound to his losing his connection with the world. How can

he pay his debts when his audio art can no longer be heard? Thus, we are introduced to the off-stage artist who immediately calls for a doctor to come help him restore the sound, shrilly exclaiming to the nurse or receptionist that it is "most urgent" (12) that he speak to the doctor, calling her "Slut!" (121) because He believes she does not understand the urgency. When the doctor calls, He declares, "they're ending" (121), "ENDING I tell you" (121). He is "very agitated" (121). We never hear the voices on the other end of the line, but can easily assume what the doctor says as He echoes "nothing what? . . . to be done?" (121). He then adds that although the words and music are fading, they are "TOGETHER" (121). Does the togetherness indicate that he has reached the pinnacle of his creativity? Critics often talk about this or that artist, in retrospect naturally, reaching a creative peak, then waning--never to recapture that glory. Why cannot the doctor help him? Is it because the artist himself made the initial decision to do minimalist art and getting smaller and smaller, fainter and fainter, reaching towards silence, is a predictable outcome? Or are we again dealing with that asymptotic line upon which the artist will strain towards silence but not truly achieve it--not, at least, until death? The doctor clearly believes that given the linear nature of things the artist is possibly experiencing the "last . . . gasps" (122) of his creativity. The doctor gives the artist this bad

news then hangs up. The artist slams down the phone, muttering "Swine!" (122)

The artist's final phone conversation is again with the doctor's nurse or receptionist. I imagine the doctor sitting back and thinking about the artist's problem. Like a doctor dealing patiently with a hypochondriac, dispensing sugar pills, he tells the nurse to suggest some assistance. Ironically, this last call comes across as condescending to the artist as the artist was condescending to the audience, She, in the first half. Here is the artist's side of this final conversation:

Miss . . . what? . . . (Music and Voice silent) .  
 . . a confinement? . . . (long pause) . . . one  
 what? . . . what? . . . breech? . . . what? . . .  
 (long pause) . . . tomorrow noon? (122)

The gaps are again left for the audience in and outside of the text to fill but strike me as much more enigmatic, contradictory, and frustrating then with the previous calls. On the written page (my first experience with this play), I quickly note that "breech" turns confinement into the delivery of a baby. The artist is to go "tomorrow noon" where the doctor will assist him in the rebirth of his creativity. He is warned that one of the elements, Voice or Music, could come out backwards (actually buttocks first), might need turning (a painful process) in order to set things right! Does He not want the words and music together? Perhaps not, for in the opening he intimates that the words and music not being together is at times a

necessary part of his creation. The doctor, then, is suggesting that he can enter the artist and fix him. Is this not a worse violation than the audience trying to bring the inside of the artist out or is it the same? Is the doctor a critic? I like that idea. The doctor as critic can jump into the artist's womb, where he holds the fetus of his art, and set things right.

I must note, however, that when you hear the play, as its performance is intended for radio, the word breech can as easily be heard breach, a "violation" or a "gap" (American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. breach). Then a confinement can be what I first imagined it, a limiting of "area, extent, or manner"; a restriction or an imprisonment (American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. confinement). In this sense, I hear that the artist will be confined (in a mental institution?) by the doctor. Perhaps, He needs a long rest in order to rejuvenate his creative prowess. During the artist's confinement, the doctor will try to reinstate the breach between Voice and Music, thus returning the artist to a previous state of artistic development. Can this work? I doubt it. Though the artist's final words, whispered, suggest that he is going to try: "Tomorrow . . . noon" (122). He will place himself into the hands of the doctor in the hopes that he can pull the artist back along the linear line of his art, thereby restoring strength to the "more and more feebl[e]" (122) efforts of Voice and Music.

The artist's fantasy of a diminishing art becomes a fantasy of linearity, a belief that he can go backward instead of forward. His transformations appropriately match. He transforms the audience's questions into probes designed to reveal his current feelings of loss and thus creates a facade to protect himself from a physical breach. With the doctor, however, He is willing to accept what I sense is an even greater, and surely less empathetic, violation by transforming the doctor's last ditch effort to be of help--collect a fee--into the fulfillment of the artist's fantasy that he can regain the past. I do not know if the artist will lose his creativity. Some do, I guess, in a public sense anyway. I keep thinking, move on. It is time to recreate, to adjust to what is perhaps a new line of exploration that is being signalled by the weakening of his current form of artistic expression. This artist's need to protect his self from intrusion by the external would seem to doom the doctor's efforts and especially his own. For as long as he maintains a process by which he staves off intrusion, how can he recapture this art, which he himself has externalized, without dropping his defenses?

I have, throughout this section, referred to the main character as an artist. Many of the characters in Beckett's drama and prose can be and have been interpreted as artists. I must also note that He and all of such Beckett characters can also be interpreted as an average person, a dockworker, a housewife, a teacher, etc. For we all struggle to live

creatively in order to align ourselves with an external world that often feels alien to us. Thus, She in Radio I becomes a concerned friend stopping only to discover that He has lost his ability to communicate with her. Voice and Music become the previously controllable functions of his identity with which he used to communicate. They are dwindling. As He feels himself withdrawing from the external, He reaches out for help, as many of us do, and as many of us do he reaches into the cold, unyielding world of linear authority. I leave him hopeful for the future, "tomorrow . . . noon" (122), yet I leave him with my own nagging doubts as to the consequences of the path he has chosen. I, then, look to my own path and wonder.

### Animator

"Tomorrow, who knows, we may be free."

When choosing a character in Radio II, I first, for basically sympathetic reasons, chose Fox. Fox is, I feel, the protagonist, and a heart-wrenching one at that. He is, at first hearing, the character I most want to be free. I realized, however, that in order to discuss Fox, I primarily would be using the dialogue of Animator, the primary antagonist, for it is through his (ad)ministrations that Fox is prodded into speaking. Plus, Animator's is, finally, the voice that cries for freedom. I envision Fox (bound, gagged, ears plugged) as a youth, a "crabbed youth" (129),

being brainwashed by an all-encompassing society from a natural world of creativity, "those everlasting wilds" (135), to a rigid, yet ironically compromising, conformity to the external. Or considering the older sounding voice of Barry McGovern, in the National Public Radio broadcast (1988), Fox is the untamed nature of child, youth, or man--an individual who has yet to or has refused to leave the "fauna" and "fodient rodents" behind for the society of man. In this sense, I read society in the play as being composed like a government or large corporation with a legislature, Animator (with ruler), a bureaucracy, Stenographer (with pad and pencils), and a judiciary, Dick (mute with whip). The only character missing is the Executive and I will argue that he, like the elusive Godot, hovers on the periphery. Animator, then, is the character whose arcing I will explore. He is the rule maker, carrying a rule(r) with which to measure compliance. The play, then, becomes about form not content, or as McGovern notes, we are concerned with "how it is about rather than what it is about" (cassette). Animator's fantasy concerns forms; like He, Animator sees life as linear, like the numbers on a ruler, running from confinement to freedom, freedom which is achieved through perfect, or more precisely, proper adjustment of all individuals into socially acceptable communication. When he cannot transform a response into the expected form, Animator, in frustration, amends (lies) in order to transform the utterance into a solid part of his



fantasy, but unwittingly compromises the fantasy by doing so, thereby suggesting that he too is being manipulated: "It does not lie entirely with us, we know" (135). He too is not free.

When Animator arcs out to the world it is, usually, as an authoritarian. On the few occasions when he breaks from his authoritarian mold, he reveals his sexual nature, speaking suggestively to Stenographer: "Ah were I but . . . forty years younger" (129); "Oh how bewitching you look when you show your teeth" (134). I find, however, that this too fits with his role as authority, legislator, for sexuality must be sanctioned by all societies in order to ensure future members. For the most part, however, he maintains his typically rigid authoritarian stance. He first checks to see that his workers have the accouterments of their branch of service: "Ready, Miss?"; "Fresh pad, spare pencils?"; "And you, Dick, on your toes? (Swish of bull's pizzle. Admiringly.) Wow! Let's hear it land" (126). The response he expects and receives is properly respectful but not subservient. At one point he yells at Stenographer then immediately apologizes as she turns cold. Another time he allows Dick to sit and Dick goes to sleep. There is a sense in which all three of these characters are interrelated and equal in the task at hand. Thus, even though Animator is aware of his ultimate authority, he is also aware that he needs help in the completion of his work. His ruler orchestrates everybody but only Stenographer records the

proceedings and only Dick beats Fox when he fails to respond.

Stenographer and Dick are in a sense representative of Animator's defense system. In the creation of a perfectly ordered society, one must have a system for record keeping and a system for doling out punishment in order to ensure full participation by all individuals. Animator defends against a chaotic world by imposing a false sense of order (through Stenographer) and turning to aggression when order fails (through Dick). Animator is responsible for seeing that Fox is brought from his individuality, which Animator sees as confinement, into the social mold. Fox must make sense to the society at large; Animator is here to oversee this process. Animator's defense "in the interest of minimizing anxiety and solving internal conflicts" is control: "the excessive attempt to manage and/or regulate events or objects in the environment for defensive purposes" (Bibring 65). When Stenographer blames herself for causing Fox to faint, Animator declares, "Perhaps I went too far . . . I chatter too much" (136). Stenographer rebounds with "don't say that, it is part of your role, as animator" (136). Is Animator's job to animate people into the society? I rather see him dragging the internal life of creative human beings outward and placing them under the subjugation of society, using any means he can to achieve his goal, even "sabotage" and "seduction" (Bibring 65). When he asks Stenographer to kiss Fox it is not a gesture of

affection but rather of seduction; he admonishes her to kiss his mouth "till it bleeds! Kiss it white!" "Suck his gullet" (136). She is a vampire, sucking the life out of Fox, at the insistence of and ultimately for Animator. Dick is equally a manifestation of Animator's controlling defense; Dick's only job is to beat Fox at Animator's command. Coupling Dick's whipping with the aggressive, seduction that Animator urges from Stenographer, I suggest that like Croak in Words And Music Animator is acting out of his own suppressed anger, attained during the separation-individuation stage but, unlike Croak, not neutralized. He does not hit with his ruler, he does bang it, but he is certainly the instigator and perpetuator of the physical abuse Fox endures. Animator must create a unified core of the external parts in order to pull it inward to match his desire for oneness and guard against his fear that there is no unified core.

Animator does not allow the recording of Fox's cries. Here he betrays his single-minded dedication to language as a communicator and as representative of a society, and a self, that refuses to hear the cries of its victims. Animator is also unsure whether or not facial expressions should be recorded, thus separating gesture from language, nullifying a visible, not audible, form of communication. He does, however, allow Stenographer to note weeping because it is a "human trait" (132), something he would allow recorded "for a sheep" (132). The suggestion is that in his

untamed isolation, Fox is no longer considered human, not because he does not arc out to his world but because the world, represented by Animator and the others, refuses to accept his vocalizations as pertinent; he fails to "treat the subject, whatever it is" (135). Animator himself is often contradictory, suggesting that even he does not know for sure what the rules are, what the subject is. He knows "what counts is not so much the thing [Beckett's emphasis], in itself . . . . No, it's the word" (133). It is a world under the tyranny of the signifier, "the notion" (133), a world deplete of things. Thus, Animator makes rules up as he goes but seems unwilling to admit that is what he does. Animator sees his own language as a physical manifestation of his self, a self he fantasizes as unvarying, unwavering, set--as real. His language is, therefore, etched in stone and he expects the world to respond to him as if that were true. Marjorie Perloff suggests that "the language becomes the actor in a curious way" (cassette). Language becomes the tyrant. Animator tells Fox to leave behind "those everlasting wilds" (135), tell a story that ties himself to the world, "even though it is not true" (135). The suggestion that Fox lie shocks Stenographer and reveals how frustrated Animator is becoming because he cannot attain the response he needs in order to affirm his existence. Animator, noting that Fox's wild language is not new, won't "astonish" (135) Animator, betrays his belief in the linearity of life, in the tyranny of language. One leaves

the wild imaginings of youth behind and joins the subdued line to freedom by using language to create a linear link to the real. Yet, what freedom can there be with no "everlasting wilds"?

Animator obviously believes in some type of freedom. He believes that freedom is bestowed by someone else. At the height of frustration with what he deems as Fox's meaningless prattle, Animator transforms Fox's text to make sense in some way (actually in a sexual way, adding "between two kisses") and thereby shocks Stenographer by his flagrant breaking of his own rule. His rigidity and obeisance to the word obviously also defines her own security. In Animator's case, though, his need to protect his sense of self overwhelms his need to observe his own rules; he sabotages the external project but placates the fearful self. Stenographer whimpers. Animator admonishes her not to "cry, Miss, dry your pretty eyes and smile at me. Tomorrow, who knows, we may be free" (138).

In other plays I have noted the missing manipulator (Act Without Words I & II, Waiting For Godot). I see Animator as that missing manipulator and he in turn reveals that he is also being manipulated. The force is unseen but strong enough to tempt Animator into compromising his own fantasy. For if his fantasy is that Fox and all others must be brought into a socially acceptable and patently understandable social milieu that echoes his own conscious, internal stance then his amending the record is totally out

of sync with his own linear, bureaucratic views, denies language as authority, and denies him the capability of ever achieving his fantasy. Not to say that his fantasy is a healthy one to begin with, but it is his and to compromise his fantasy is to compromise his own sense of self. Finally, Animator's admission that he and his cohorts are themselves not free also belies the strength of his own fantasy. For if he truly believes that movement from confinement, early creativity, into the social milieu is a move to freedom, then why are they not free? I begin to wonder if what I perceived as Animator's unconscious fantasy, based on his arcing out to the world, is not merely the introjected brainwashing of the society he has joined. Then, perhaps, Animator, at moments of great frustration, reveals his true belief which is that the society and all in it are the repressed, the confined. Langbaum suggests that in Beckett's plays "there is no society" (120). Therefore, there is "no social function that might make [Beckett's characters] respectable" (122). I can envision a society at work in this play. Animator believes that he has a social function, that by forcing one more creative individual into the social mold, he might have a chance, perhaps not for respectability (although I have trouble defining that word anyway), but for freedom from the very society of which his function is a part. I fear that the reality is he can never attain freedom as long as he waits for someone to free him

and as long as he relies on his "method" (130) to achieve it.

As I read Radio II, it speaks to all of us about the societies we create and live in. In this play, as in several of the other plays, I could also have interpreted it as about the artist. Briefly, Fox is the artist whose work is frustratingly opaque to most people; therefore, Animator mercilessly attacks Fox, seeking to force him to explicate his art. In the end, unable to sway Fox from his own internal sense of art, Animator, in the style of some critics and patrons of the arts, amends the art in order to reveal a purpose that can be understood by a larger audience. In one sense, amending the text is what all people do with art, for we cannot read a book, watch or hear a play, see a painting without adding to or deleting from the original as each of us transforms the art into a satisfying vision of our own concerns. Perhaps I can forgive Animator his license with Fox's text for Animator believes that by transforming the text he can possibly attain freedom. Freedom is quite an incentive. Perhaps freedom is a signifier that we too often divorce from the "thing," thereby relegating it to mere "notion."

#### Conclusion

Langbaum states that Beckett's are "unindividuated characters with stylized faces, whose single names do not

name them, give no clue to family, class, nation" (120). I find them to be individuated characters whose class, nationality, or name are of little, if any, consequence, but whose relationships be they with family or simply others in their world are quite specifically outlined through the manner in which each of them arcs out to the world, responds to the world, defends him or herself against the world, and goes on.

All of the radio play characters I have discussed are aware that they exist. Each is aware of problems concerning existence. Maddy longs for a closer physical bond with Dan in order to fulfill her fantasy of union, lost when Minnie died. Henry knows that he needs someone to be with him but is unable to overcome the painful fantasy that relationships lead to the death of the self. Croak desires to eliminate the potential space between the me and not me in order to bring the external Voice into union with the internal Music. Opener, feeling threatened by the external, projects his internal creations onto the external, thereby denying his own creativity. The character He fears the loss of his creativity and reaches out from a linear fantasy in the hope of being able to regress in time. Animator belies the validity of his fantasy by compromising it in order to gain some elusive freedom. Often, Beckett's characters seem at first glance to be alike. He often places them in similar circumstances. They are often alone. They are usually unhappy with their plight. They are, however, alone and



unhappy for different reasons. I meet different people as I investigate the plays. Different people who are like all of us in some respects but perfectly unique in others. We all must deal with our need to be separate but together; we all must deal with unhappiness, with loss, with feelings of insecurity; we all deal with the adversities of a life fraught with contradictions, a life leading inexorably to death, but we all deal with existence in our own unique way. One facet of each character, however, coincides: each one arcs out to his world and expects a response. This response, no matter how we transform it, becomes an integral part of how we define ourselves. It is to this notion of listening, the integral step in our reception of a response that I now turn.

According to Bernard Beckerman in "Beckett and the Act of Listening," "speaking and listening is, of course, the mode of most drama, but seldom does an author direct attention to this reciprocal act as an act" (150). Beckerman notes, however, that from Beckett's earliest plays, somewhat in Endgame but specifically in Krapp's Last Tape and Happy Days "the prime visual image of Beckett's drama begins to stress the act of listening" (150). In KLT, Beckett "fuses speaker and listener" (151); in HD, Beckett "begins the process of unhinging the speaker from the listener" (151). As his work progresses, Beckett "proceeds to narrow his focus on speaking and listening" and "becomes enmeshed in two related problems: first, how to relate the

listening a character does to the listening an audience does, and second, how to make images of sound as compelling as images of sight" (151). Beckett has moved toward forcing the audience to identify with a listener on the stage, such as the Auditor in Not I, Joe in Eh Joe, the light in Play (152-153); we identify and yet are somewhat alienated from these characters (152). "Thus, the speaking-listening relationship is unbalanced" (153); we become "dissociat[ed]" (153), "raising the question whether listening is possible at all" (157). Later plays, such as That Time when "the sounds [the characters listen to] are [clearly] the traces of his memory" and yet "the blankness of his face turns the audience into a direct recipient of language" (159) reposes Beckett's questions about listening: "Can listening to ourselves elicit a coherent image of our lives? Are we anything other than listeners to our own memories?" (158) Beckerman suggests that such confusion over who is the actual listener thwarts the traditional "overhearer with insight" stance of the audience and brings them into direct contact with the "speaker-listener complex" (160): "It undermines any sense of detachment without completing identity" (162). In other words when we see two actors on the stage, we voyeuristically watch each "engaged in a transforming encounter with another . . . one self [his emphasis] seeks to neutralize the alien other [his emphasis] and absorb or obliterate it" (161). Beckett cancels this traditional scenario "by finding a way to position us, the

audience, both inside and outside the experience at one and the same time" (166).

That Beckett has increasingly focused on the act of listening rings hauntingly true to me. I vividly remember my discomfort at feeling forced into the role of antagonist in Play, trapped as both listener and as instigator of what I am listening to. I would not so much consider Beckett to be asking if listening is possible as much as I sense his plays point out how difficult it is to listen. Difficult, but not impossible. As separate entities, who nevertheless need response from the external in order to maintain that separation, I find it easy to forget that others have the same need to be heard and responded to in a way that whether satisfactory to them or not at least feeds their own sense of self. Anyone who has ever attended a faculty meeting must surely at times be awed by all the isolated babble going on, all the people expressing themselves, but no others listening with any desire to respond, only waiting for their turn. We, thus, lose chances to communicate on a daily basis. Is not this the listening that Beckett is focusing on? You may babble all day and feel some sense of satisfaction but the true satisfaction comes from babble that is heard, that ends in response. Satisfaction comes from the completion of multiple dyads of speaking and listening, interaction that does not merely leave you with a sense of satisfaction but offers response and counterresponse and thus allows another human being the same

satisfaction. Maddy questions those she encounters but will only listen if she can transform their responses into her own negative sense of self. With Dan, however, she seeks true communication and, I think, at times they achieve it. Henry needs to share his insecurities with Ada and Addie but finds a stoic father-figure, who nonetheless lost his self in the sea, blocking his ability to do so. Croak's overwhelming desire to transform the external to a satisfactory definition of the internal precludes his allowing others any freedom of response. The same can be said about Opener and He. (If the argument is that the artist must isolate himself in order to create then we have forgotten that the artist was not born with the tools of his creations; they came from others in some manner.) Animator, trapped within a rigid sense of self, is incapable of listening to anything that does not conform to his internal definition.

Animator's intention is to "obliterate" "the alien other" (Beckerman 161) and surely many of the radio characters try to "absorb" (161) others. These terms, however, seem too harsh without considering that such obliteration or absorption is something these characters do to themselves by transforming the responses they receive from the others. The others, themselves, are not literally obliterated or absorbed unless, of course, this suits their own definition of self. When Beckett's characters flee a Maddy or Henry, they do so because they are protecting their

own sense of self from a person conceived as a threat. The irony is clear. Maddy chases people away in order to erase the threat of contagious optimism; they flee from her negativity. Henry drives people away because he feels they threaten his autonomy; they leave because he is unwilling to make them feel wanted. In our discussions of the self, we must never forget the other. I believe Beckett's emphasis on listening forces us to remember that all of our experiences, even the internal ones, involve an external other. If we try to live alone, we lose sight of the bottom line: our need to interact so that when we are alone we have something with which to work.

By moving to the medium of radio, Beckett confirms the need for us to listen then to look inside, look to the workings of our own psyche but not to forget the needs of others. Homan suggests that "the fact that radio is nothing but sound removes it just that much from that physical verification at the heart of the legitimate theater" (Theaters 129). Ben-Zvi suggests "the ear becomes all" (W&M cassette). By forcing us further away from the physical than the stage plays could ever do, we are forced to recreate the physical universe in our heads, to use our heads to investigate not only how we create the fictional universe of the plays but, by comparison, how we create and recreate the physical universe of our daily lives. . Our lives are an intriguing mixture of physical fact and psychological fiction. We take the physicality of our world

and transform it into the fictions which satisfy our expectations, our fantasies, our need to be unique and our equal need to be one of many. We use internal defenses to protect ourselves from anything we perceive as threats to our sense of the real whether our sense be positive or negative. Beckett's drama, by introducing characters who have unique ways of dealing with life, by refusing to answer all the questions, by leaving life hanging on a continuum, replicates our own feelings of uncertainty and awakens us to the uncertainty others feel and, at least in my opinion, encourages us to investigate the labyrinth of our own lives.

### Notes

1. Grete Bibring compiled the glossary of defenses that I use here and elsewhere in my text, but she notes that "this work was derived primarily by Arthur F. Valenstein, M.D., from unpublished notes and concepts developed by Edward Bibring, M.D. and Arthur F. Valenstein, M.D. It is based in part on Anna Freud's formulations in The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense (1936)."

2. There is some confusion as to the order in which the last four radio plays were written. The Roughs for Radio I and II were possibly written before Words and Music and certainly before Cascando. For probably the best insight into the chronology of these plays, see Robert Wilcher's "'Out of the Dark': Beckett's Texts for Radio." I have chosen to discuss Words and Music and Cascando based on the dates of their first broadcasts, respectively 1962 and 1963. I follow these two plays with Radio I (never broadcast) for thematic continuity and end with Radio II, first broadcast in 1976.

3. The original score for Words and Music was composed by Beckett's cousin, John Beckett. Beckett, however, desired a new score for the National Public Radio broadcast. He asked Morton Feldman to create the new score. Ironically, this composition was the next to the last piece Feldman ever composed. The last composition by Feldman, entitled For Samuel Beckett, was written shortly before his death in 1987 (see cassette).

4. When asked if he wanted Radio I included in the National Public Radio broadcasts, Beckett responded that the work, which has never been produced, was "'unfinished and now unfinishable'" (cassette). However, because he did allow the play to be published, I take the license to work solely with the text.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE TELEVISION PLAYS: "MAKE SENSE WHO MAY."

Beckett wrote his first television play, Eh Joe, in 1965, a few years after his last radio play, Cascando (1962). If, as I have suggested, Beckett's move to radio puts an increasing emphasis on listening as an integral part of our need to communicate, the part often usurped by the word, then it seems reasonable that the move to television puts an increasing emphasis on the act of viewing. Homan in his first work on Beckett calls the chapter on the television plays "Theater of Sight" (Theaters 142). All the elements of stage drama are here but the area we look at is radically reduced in size and the visual focus is further controlled by the camera. By taking control of the camera, Beckett takes a stricter control over what we see. In 1983 Beckett reminisced about the circumstances under which he wrote Waiting for Godot:

'When I was working on Watt [while hiding from the Nazis during WW II] . . . I felt the need to create for a smaller space, one in which I had some control of where people stood or moved, above all of a certain light. I wrote Waiting for Godot.' (Brater, "Origins" 4).

When a play is on the stage, however, the dramatist cannot control my eyes; they roam at will over the set. I will not necessarily be watching the speaker all of the time. My



eyes drift toward the wings, wondering what is back there. I look at other people in the audience, judging their reactions, comparing them to mine. My eyes enjoy a certain freedom of movement. The radio plays took the visual away and forced me to sit and listen. The television plays encourage, even force, me to look in specific ways. Beckett, behind the camera, limits my vision to the dimensions of a box, then further limits my vision within the box. Beckett not only controls the people on the stage but now, more than ever, the people watching. I get the sense of a dramatist turned tyrant. Beckett has become his own audience. We are secondary viewers, the ultimate voyeurs. Limiting space and action has, I think, the effect of forcing us to turn to a sense of which we still feel in control: listening.

Thus, Beckett's becoming primary audience is still to emphasize listening. In Eh Joe, after watching Joe search his room, the play consists of one shot of Joe, looming ever larger, as we focus on a female voice chiding him for his cruelties. The majority of Ghost Trio is spent looking at the floor, the wall, the pallet, and a man sitting on a stool, holding a cassette. Again a female voice dominates, simultaneously describing and directing the play. The narrator in but the clouds spins a narrative web that lays bare his drab, rigid existence interspersed with his longing for and visions of a woman, all echoing over a screen alternately filled with a man's back, a woman's face, and a

man/automaton going through the same routine over and over. Quad replaces dialogue with the sound of footsteps (Homan, Filming 22). Nacht und Träume would seem to be an exception, for here there is no language, only occasional soft music and a few lines of song. The action, however, is minimal and I often feel that I am hearing not only the music but the physicality of the dream hands fulfilling the dreamer's wish. As in several of his stage and radio plays, Beckett further emphasizes listening by at times creating a disassociation between the listener and the speaker. Joe as listener remains "practically motionless throughout, eyes unblinking during paragraphs, impassive except in so far as it reflects mounting tension of listening [Beckett's emphasis]" (202). The speaker in Ghost Trio seems to speak directly to the audience, remaining unheard by the character. Such disassociation within the stage, emphasizes the audience's role as listener.

Whatever Beckett's own reasons might have been for working in television, I find the plays incredibly focused not only on listening, but as usual on man in distress, man in his folly, man in his dreams. I find that the resounding vision in these plays still supports my own thesis that in Beckett's endless reductions, he highlights man's dilemma, man's need to be unique, an individual, and his equal need to be with an other, to be one. These plays, by limiting us to basically mundane visions, encourage us to listen, to complete the dyad of linguistic perception, of

communication, to hear man in distress, share his distress, and rise above it.

Having isolated the framework of identity in Beckett's stage plays and then isolated and sought to represent the identity of one character from each of Beckett's radio plays, I now work separately with each television play. I use various psychoanalytic theories, including Lichtenstein and Winnicott but also Horney and Freud, to discuss each play as a whole without necessarily isolating any particular factors, beyond the camera, that all the plays share.

Besides using psychoanalytic theory, my interpretations of the television plays are fashioned in part by the fact that I worked on a project in which these plays were produced. During the spring of 1988 at the University of Florida, Dr. Sidney Homan approached me with an offer to assist in his direction of this production. Our initial goal was to tape each play as closely to Beckett's specifications as possible then tape our own variations of some of the plays (two for Quad, one for Eh Joe, one for but the clouds),<sup>1</sup> then tag each play with reader-response questions to spark classroom participation. Our long-range goal was to publish these plays as a tool to be used in the classroom for the edification of drama, Beckett, and reader response.<sup>2</sup> As assistant director, I found myself involved in every aspect of the taping. I scrounged around for props, moved the camera, cued the actors and actresses, put up sets, tore down sets, helped solve technical problems,

worked on editing, worked on developing the reader-response questions, free-associated along with everyone else in order to create the variations, and in general put my two cents in whenever the spirit moved me. The experience enabled me not only to gauge my own response to each play but the responses of the others involved in the production and audiences to whom I have since shown the plays. Having helped to produce these plays is the ultimate reason why I chose to deal with the television plays as separate units and in a more thorough fashion rather than choose from among Beckett's better-known works. I might add that I am more eager to explore these plays because they have not received the attention of, for example, Waiting for Godot, Krapp's Last Tape, or Endgame.

### Eh Joe

After working on the production of Eh Joe, I felt haunted. The haunting began as I watched our actor (David Preuss) struggle to sit, facing the camera, with little change in facial expression for what seemed an eternity. David looked frazzled at the end of the play and, in fact, told Homan, "'I'm exhausted from doing that . . . . It's the hardest thing I've ever done onstage'" (Homan, Filming 72). Jack MacGowran, the actor for whom Beckett wrote this play in 1965, also says, "It was the most grueling twenty-two minutes I have ever had in my life" (Toscan 221). Noting

these actors' reactions to playing Joe and comparing these reactions to the usual exhilaration I have heard actors express after performing in other Beckett plays, I began to look more closely at Joe's situation. I have read, seen and heard many Beckett plays in which a lonely person, suffering from self-withdrawal, creates an other or others as consolation. Eh Joe is different. Joe creates others but receives no consolation. Beckett's characters are rarely lovable but they all elicit a certain empathy from the audience. In my opinion, however, Joe is one of Beckett's least sympathetic characters, and yet I like him, even hurt for him. I wondered why. While seeking an answer to this question, I kept returning to the play's violence. I felt the violence intensely: Joe's violence, his cruelty to those who loved him. The violence in Eh Joe also strikes me as different from the violence in other Beckett plays. The slapstick humor of Waiting for Godot often degenerates into actual physical violence; violence is verbalized in Endgame and, for obvious reasons, in the radio play All That Fall. In several plays, Beckett's characters have become their own worst enemy, imprisoning themselves away from the world and creating others who by bombarding the main characters with language only barely keep them feeling alive (That Time, Embers, Krapp's Last Tape, etc.). I realized that in Beckett's inexorable move from the external to the internal he not only provides radical adaptations of the traditional stage but even of man himself, or rather of the way the

audience views man and his emotional life. Joe, like Krapp and Henry, has created an other but instead of providing a means for Joe to feel alive, the voice seems bent on violating Joe's sense of existence, on reminding him that he will join the dead that he "throttle[s] . . . in his head" (37). In Eh Joe violence has become internalized with the others that Joe creates; the "mental thuggee" (37) of Eh Joe is alone and I suggest that the most insidious violence is the violence Joe perpetuates within himself because he no longer has external others for release. Joe has internalized and identified with all the significant objects/others of his past life, recreating his self as the sole victim of his own violence.

I draw my discussion concerning the violence in Eh Joe mainly from two sources: Winnicott's Playing and Reality and Lichtenstein's The Dilemma of Human Identity. Winnicott stresses a child's first object relations and traces the development of the child from the symbiotic stage during which there is only the me (self) to the child's gradual realization and acceptance of the not me (objects and others). Winnicott defines healthy psychology as being the product of successful, creative relationships between the me and not me, relationships that broaden into the creative acts of all individuals whether these acts be artistic in intent or the daily manipulations (within socially acceptable standards, however borderline) of outside stimuli one performs to suit his individual needs. Winnicott's

theory concerning potential space, the place where the sense of self is maintained: "an intermediate area of experiencing [his emphasis], to which inner and external life both contribute" (2), particularly leads me to connect his theories with Lichtenstein's notion that our sense of self, the sense that I am, only develops in relationship with the external world (8). So, what occurs when a human being, a character like Joe, withdraws from the external world? Winnicott would say that the loss of object relations signals the loss of creative living, a regression to total compliance, "a sick basis for life" (65). Lichtenstein makes a stronger statement:

There is never any certainty that, once born, he [the infant] is going to become human. And if he does, it is still always at issue whether he will remain human. This is due to the fact that the identity human beings are able to create for themselves is maintained only through a specific kind of interaction with another one from whom an affirmation of the reality of existence can be obtained. (11)

Lichtenstein puts it bluntly; a human being who withdraws from the external world becomes something less than human. In relation to Beckett's solitary characters, Ruby Cohn echoes such judgements by stating that a character's "withdrawal into the mental microcosm results in death" (Comic 50), not I note always a literal death as in Murphy (Cohn's subject at the time), but the psychological death prevalent among Beckett's dramatic characters. Thus, I suggest that in Eh Joe, Joe has withdrawn from the external after a lifetime of being openly hostile to others out of

whatever internal lack he developed in infancy or even later (we cannot know). Having withdrawn, he has internalized the others of his past, thereby essentially erasing the potential space between the me and not me. The only identity he embraces, the only sense that I am, comes from his projection of the objects he has internalized. The violence he perpetrated on them is now being perpetrated on himself, within himself, by himself, ironically through a female voice or as Winnicott might note, the female element that forms the basis for our sense of "Being" (82).

In Eh Joe the camera first holds steady, revealing the entire set, showing Joe in his tiny room, moving intently from window to door to cupboard to bed, searching. Satisfied that he is utterly alone, Joe sits on the end of his bed. The camera then focuses only on Joe's face as a female voice begins to speak. She talks to Joe about his cruelty to the others (his father, mother, and herself) who have loved him. She speaks of how he has internalized all others in turn and mentally finished them off, stilled them. During long pauses (nine total), the camera moves forward four inches at a time, ever closer to Joe who relaxes during the pauses but then strains with increasing intensity to hear the voice when it returns. After relating a detailed account about a young girl who killed herself when Joe left her, the voice slowly weakens and dies away. Joe's strained expression now completely fills the screen and is cut out with the last words of the voice.



By first defining Joe's space with the camera while directing our attention not merely to the limited area around Joe but to Joe's attempts to limit it further through exploration, Beckett emphasizes Joe's withdrawal from the external. Joe moves around his small space checking out of the door and window for lurking others, even searching the cupboard and taking care to lock it, though he has most surely not found anyone there, no one inside or outside his space. Crossing to his bed, Joe peers beneath it, and then satisfied, "beginning to relax" (35), he sits on the edge of his bed. As if to punctuate the expulsion of the external, the Winnicottian not me, the camera now concentrates only on Joe's face, obliterating once and for all the external world. As the camera moves, four inches at a time during pauses in the dialogue, ever closer to Joe's face, the movement of Beckett's art obliterates the potential space, albeit asymptotically but as close to the edge of obliteration as possible. I walk into Joe's mind.

The voice begins. The voice is female. Joe "experiences [the voice] as an alien presence within his consciousness" (Lyons 152), but I sense it is Joe's voice because I have seen the search. He is alone, recreating the voice of an old love, the female voice of Being, the inner voice of Joe's awareness of his withdrawal and the voice of self-retribution and internal violence. Brater calls the voice "like flint-glass" (EJ 38) "accusatory, even malicious" (Why 118). The voice confirms his aloneness and

his withdrawal: "No one can see you now . . . No one can get at you now" (36); "Say it now, Joe, no one'll hear you" (37); "Anyone living love you now, Joe?" (37); "Not another soul to still" (37). Alone, Joe relives the external acts of violence. The violence was psychological as far as I can surmise from the text but as real as any beating to his live victims. When did he first internalize an other and beat the other to death? The voice suggests that, in cowardly fashion, he began with the first dead. His father died and Joe began to hear him: "Started in on you one June night and went on for years" (37). "That's how you were able to throttle him in the end" (37), because the father was then "behind [Joe's] eyes" (37) not in front of them. Then Joe's mother died and she moved behind his eyes, declaring, "'Look up, Joe, look up, we're watching you'" (37). They loved Joe, "such love he got" (37), but he couldn't handle the love. I sense that the external became a threat to him early on; he believed that he could live, could define himself, could maintain his self, without such external interruption--without a relatedness to the world that expects/even forces requital; "Such love he got" (37). When his parents died, he "throttled the dead in his head" (37), throttled them for trying to make him live.

My first instinct was that Joe was punishing the internalized objects for loving him. I took thuggee in the literal Eastern sense: "the murderous practices or methods of the thugs in India" (The American Heritage Dictionary,

s.v. thuggee). I envisioned Joe as a thug, committing violence on others. "Mental thuggee" (37) then refers to the petty acts of violence that Joe perpetrates on the objects in his head. Then I began to relate thuggee to a construction like donee; Joe is also the receiver of the thug's (his own) violence. "One of his happiest fantasies," that he is throttling, at last, the dead he could not completely throttle in life is turned on him. He is the thuggee not the thugger. To move from my word play, I also note that the word thug has its roots in the Sanskrit sthagati, "to cover, hide" (The American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. thug). Joe is hiding; he is hiding in his head. He attempts to cover his loneliness by recreating others because he has lost the ability to relate to the world outside. The voice goes on, moves on towards the end of the line, the time when all the voices are stilled and his heart, "dry rotten at last" (36), crumbles. Perhaps, he hides and punishes himself, perpetuates the external violence on the internalized objects because he is guilty. Cohn suggests that this play "anatomizes guilt" (Play 6): "Joe is haunted by a guilt expressed in his own words but in the voice of a loved and abandoned woman, since he apparently abandoned all those who loved him" (Play 128). Joe is guilty. Now Joe is alone, except for "that slut that comes on Saturday" (37). He has internalized the others who loved him, ironically, the very ones he abandoned. He is

lost in identification (witness the voice) born of his guilt:

a form of self-punishing identification which is attributable to the hostile destructive component of an ambivalent tie to an object. It usually leads to taking over qualities of a self-punitive nature, more on an introjective than an imitative basis. One might in this way establish within one's self a personality trait or symptom characteristic of the object, which in effect represents both the destruction of and the preservation of this object. (Bibring 68)

Ironically, the victims Joe chooses for his sessions of violent recrimination are all dead, "stilled." The present one loved him, believed (for a time) his seductive "the best's to come" (36). She was, however, "strong" (38) enough in the end to accept the battering, the betrayal by Joe just as he, having become her, accepts her battering and betrayal. She moved on to find a "better . . . kinder . . . stronger . . . truthful . . . faithful" (39) man. The reverse implications of Joe's character are more explicitly revealed when the speaker who, though now dead, survived the violence of Joe and now details the demise of one who "didn't" (39), couldn't survive Joe: the suicide.

The graphic and hauntingly lyrical depiction of the suicide grips at me, terrorizes me with her futile, painful efforts and, thus, suggests that the pain was worth it even for one who "always dreaded pain" (40). Worth it to escape Joe. She, too, believed Joe's lie that, "the best's to come" (39). She was not strong. She was "spirit made light" (39) by her love for Joe, by her belief in his love

for her, by the "heavenly powers" (40) he had released from her in the night. "She went young" (39), after he'd "had her" (39), promising a tomorrow, "bundling her into her Avoca sack" and watching "her fingers fumbling with the big horn buttons" (39). All the while he was assured of his own "flight," "ticket in your pocket" (39). "Ever know what happened" (40), Joe? Of course he does, for now (s)he rolls it by in all its bizarrely poetic detail. To "cut a long story short" she could not simply lie down with "her face in the wash" (40). "To cut another long story short" (40), she could not use the blade, previously bought to please Joe, to open up her veins. There are easier ways and she found one; she was determined to escape the pain of Joe. She takes "the tablets" and thus sedated returns to her original plan, lying down near the incoming tide, "scoop[ing] a little place for her face in the stones" (41); "spirit made light" (41) returning to spirit? "Eh Joe?" (41) Joe opens her and closes her. As she closes, does she call his name? "Say 'Joe' it parts the lips [Beckett's emphasis]" (41) like a kiss. "Eh Joe?" (41) She dies wearing his promise, "the solitaire [Beckett's emphasis]" (41) turned to stone: "There's love for you [Beckett's emphasis] . . . Isn't it, Joe?" (41)

Joe listens intently, understanding the "penny farthing hell [he] call[s his] mind" (37), knowing that "'Mud thou art'" (40). As the camera moves ever closer to Joe's face, the voice threatens Joe, reminding him that he is always

able at some time to "still" (38) the particular voice he is identifying with. This voice, however, notes that the killing off of the voice is in itself "the worst" (38): voice quieting to a "whisper . . . The odd word . . . Straining to hear . . . Brain tired squeezing" (38). Still, he "stop[s] the voices in the end" (38). The voice teases Joe with not stopping: "Imagine . . . if it went on . . . The whisper in your head . . . Till you join us" (38). However, the real threat comes when the voice suggests, "I'll soon be gone . . . The last of them" (40). She is not the last. I remember the end of Bibring's definition of introjection from guilt: "One might in this way establish within one's self a personality trait or symptom characteristic of the object, which in effect represents both the destruction of and the preservation of this object." Joe ultimately destroys the objects he has internalized, but he doesn't want to destroy this one. He wants with all his being to preserve this one. As the "voice drops to whisper, almost inaudible" (41) this is the signal of Joe's ultimate despair. For now there is only one left to identify with, one left to perpetrate the violence, one not yet stilled, "the best's to come . . . in the end" (37). He may dread the Lord: "Wait till he starts talking to you" (39) and he dreads the others he has stilled, but he dreads most the last one, the suicide. When she starts in on him surely Joe will follow her to the ultimate personal violence, for "there's love for you . . . Wasn't it, Joe?

. . . Eh Joe?" (41) She asks, "What it'd be if you ran out of us . . . Not another soul to still" (37), but he knows there is another yet--the worst--the last. He won't "sit there in his stinking old wrapper" becoming "weaker and weaker" for the last soul he stilled will still him.

Joe left the world out of his scheme of life, except as it suited some remnants of need. By doing this, by denying the not me, his relatedness to the external, Joe has effectively destroyed his creativity, suffered psychological death, become some(one)thing not quite human. Therein lies my pity, my sadness for Joe. Ironically, in an effort to rely solely on the self without relatedness to the external Joe has been led by his overriding, if unacknowledged, need for others to absorb the object world so totally that he is the epitome of a compliant, self-less individual. His reliance on the identifications, the introjections of others against whom he has rebelled throughout his life brings a creativity he cannot understand because its roots lie totally outside of himself. He knows the worst, not the best, is yet to come but is powerless to stop it; he now lives in total compliance to a world he betrayed. He hides, from whom? Who cares? He masturbates, perhaps physically, certainly mentally, but there is no climax, no orgasm, no release, only increasing frustration, impotence, and fear. Eh, Joe?

### Ghost Trio

While we were shooting Eh Joe, I helped move the camera in the straight line ever closer to Joe, keeping my focus on the actor and thus on his discomfort and ultimately Joe's. During the taping of Ghost Trio, I was again called on to help ensure the smooth movement of the camera. This time, however, the movements were more complicated as we had to quickly shift from view A to B to C and back a number of times. Two of us had to hold the cables clear, hunch down on opposite sides of the camera, and move it along to each new position. So, oddly enough, my first viewing of this play was from a stooped, awkward, even unsure position. Perhaps that is why I view the character as stooped, awkward, and unsure--sitting hunched on a stool, cocking his head over a cassette, raising his head "sharply" when he thinks "he hears her" (250). I had recently read Horney's Neurosis and Human Growth; some of her diagnostic language kept running through my head: neurotic claims, self-effacing solution, inertia. Ben-Zvi suggests that Ghost Trio "offers certain familiar Beckettian themes: waiting for someone or something that never arrives; a messenger sent to indicate the absence of the desired one; and a figure alone in a bare room" (34). I want to interpret why F is waiting, what the messenger represents in terms of F's own character, and what keeps F alone in that bare room. When I watch our production of the play, I still feel myself crouching



beneath that camera and still retain a Third Force vision of F; therefore, I investigate the play using Horney's theory in an attempt to answer my own questions about F. Ghost Trio begins with a general view of a small room. A female voice-over calls our attention to the grey room<sup>3</sup> and its contents. The camera follows her lead moving from the general view to close-ups of the floor, the wall, the door, the pallet, etc. After a second close-up of the floor, the cut back to a general view reveals the "sole sign of life a seated figure" (249), "seated on a stool, bowed forward, face hidden, clutching with both hands a small cassette" (249). We begin to hear the music, from the largo of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Trio (The Ghost), as the camera closes in on the man, then the music fades as the camera returns to the general view. In the second scene we learn the man, F, is waiting for someone, "thinks he hears her" (250), checks out of the door. Finding "no one" (250), he looks out the window then stares at the pallet and finally looks into a mirror. He returns to the stool then repeats the above action. In the third scene, the voice is gone. F repeats the action of the second scene, with some variations. We hear rain; we finally see a close-up of his face in the mirror. The second time he opens the door, instead of the empty hallway we have seen before, we see a small boy "dressed in black oilskin with hood glistening with rain" (253). The boy shakes his head twice then

leaves. F returns to his stool, the music grows then fades. The scene fades out.

Horney argues "that inherent in man are evolutionary constructive forces, which urge him to realize his given potentialities" (15), that urge him to "strive toward self-realization" (15). Man grows, "in the true sense, only if he assumes responsibility for himself" (15), but "all kinds of pressure can easily divert our constructive energies into unconstructive or destructive channels" (15), at which point we lose sight of our real self and create an idealized self who, "in his search for glory," develops neurotic claims to help him cope unscathed with what is seen as a threatening world (23). When dealing with patients, Horney looks at the patient's present dynamics, attempting to uncover the constructs that hide the real self. Compared to the idealized self, Horney's real self is a "central inner force, common to all human beings and yet unique in each" (17). Horney further attests that the real self is "the deep source of growth" (17). I am reminded of Lichtenstein's notion of a core identity unique to each individual and his idea that all psychic functions are geared to the preservation and actualization of this core identity. I have no problem, therefore, with incorporating Horney into my own conglomeration of theories. Since this play gives few clues to F's past, I am comfortable with investigating his present dynamics in order to reveal his character.

The dynamics of F's present life are first expressed through the mise en scene. Horney suggests that a human being "needs [at all times in his life but especially as a child] an atmosphere of warmth to give him both a feeling of inner security and the inner freedom enabling him to have his own feelings and thoughts and to express himself" (18). This atmosphere is produced initially by parents and later by friends and acquaintances, but we all accept the imperfection of life. Adverse conditions often prevail despite the good intentions of those around us. For me, the opening of Ghost Trio suggests a cold, sterile, and insecure environment. A "faint [female] voice" introduces us to F's chamber as if she were introducing us to his friends (perhaps she is). I note that here, as in Eh Joe, a female voice suggests to me Winnicott's female element of being and spurs my thoughts to F's sense of existence. We first see the entire room, then a close-up of the floor (noting the dust), the wall (again noting the dust), the door with "no knob" (248), the "opaque" (248) window, and the pallet. The barrage of language in Eh Joe is here at first replaced with a barrage of things, cold, dusty, impenetrable things. Is this a definition of F's external world? Or is it a definition of F's internal world? Horney theorizes that neurotic claims are developed when the individual has to account for the discrepancies and indignities he feels he suffers from the intrusion of the real world on his idealized self. "The reality outside [the neurotic does

not] treat him as though it found him godlike" (40). He must do the little mundane things, like "wait in line," that we all do (40). Therefore, he concludes that the world is "wrong," "ought to be different" (41). "And so, instead of tackling his illusions, he presents a claim to the outside world. He is entitled to be treated by others, or by fate, in accord with his grandiose notions about himself" (41). He no longer worries about his problems; "it is up to others to see that they do not disturb him" (41). The juxtaposition of the bare, dirty room jolts me into such a sense of alienation. F's external world does not fit his illusions about the lost one, the one for whom or which he waits. His undisturbed room suggests his withdrawal from the external in order to maintain the "grandiose notions" he has claimed for himself.

The voice runs through the particulars of the setting twice, repeating the suggestion that we note "the kind [my emphasis] of wall" (248-9), pallet, door, etc. The kind? The ilk? The variety? If I am to note what kind of things these are, I will suggest, as before, that the wall and floor are dusty and need attention; the door has no knob, making me feel claustrophobic; the window contains opaque glass, adding to the claustrophobia, ensuring I cannot look out but also, comfortingly, ensuring that no one can look in. The pallet seems most inappropriate to me as I relish a comfortable bed. In general, I do not like the room and its things. I would be most unhappy here. Is F, too, unhappy?

It would seem so. He is certainly inert at this point in the play. Inertia, for me, suggests unhappiness. When unhappy, however, I work problems out by getting on with my life, moving around in the external world, dusting, until a solution pops into my head. I think F has been inert too long. The dust has gathered both externally and internally. F is cold and insecure when faced with the external. He sits and waits, listening to "faint music" (249), for the world to change.

The only thing, at first, that F seems aware of is the cassette. The cassette, I note, was not introduced with the rest of the room. He, then, still retains some contact with the external through the cassette, through the music which perhaps holds the memory of someone or something he wishes to retain or reclaim, some other. We first hear the Beethoven when the camera focuses on the door, suggesting to me that he plays it to the door (almost as a ritual)--praying that she opens it so the mournful music can stop. This is all he does. For me the music is haunting, nostalgic. I find I respond most to the violin which seems to cry. The music makes me feel alone and sense his aloneness, perhaps his morbid preoccupation with aloneness. There is, after all, no dust on the cassette. At the end of the first scene, the camera slowly closes in on F, the "sole sign of life" (249), and I, crouched under the camera, feel an overwhelming sense of loneliness, of isolation, of life not lived and aching knees. My feelings only intensify as

the camera pulls away from F; the music fades out, and the scene ends with a general view of that wretched room and that wretched man.

The second scene opens with the voice saying, "He will now think he hears her" (250); I see F "sharply" (250) raise his head. The thought of her rouses F to action. He looks out the door; he raises (has to) and looks out the window; he even looks at the pallet. Is that the last place he saw her? There is "no one" (250). He looks in "the mirror" and says "Ah!" (251) He sits back down, thinks he hears her again, looks out the door again, sits back down; the camera pulls away; the music fades out. End of scene. I know a bit more now. I know that he has a mirror on the wall that, like the cassette, I have not been introduced to. I know he is hoping to hear her, whoever she is. Can I assume a lost love? What are the odds that he is going to see her? Why is he just sitting there waiting for her to pop in? Why doesn't he go out that door, that I now know he can open, and look for her?

When F looks at that pallet it is as if he expects her to suddenly appear there. Horney suggests that a neurotic's "need for magic help" causes him to "endow [others] with mysterious magic faculties" (294). I am, however, ahead of myself. Is F neurotic? He does seem to be suffering from periodic inertia, "a paralysis of psychic energies" which "extends not only to doing things but to thinking and feeling as well" (Horney 60), which Horney notes "is

perhaps the most frequent neurotic disturbance" (60). The only times I get a suggestion that F is thinking are when he thinks he hears her and when he is "surprised" (251) by his face in the mirror. The first seems a mere revelation of his obsession and the second a revelation of his surprise that he exists without his obsession. His unconscious neurotic claim is "that the mere intention should be enough to bring about achievement" (Horney 60) of his desires. He wants her there; she should appear. He does not exist without her; he shouldn't be there.

F is self-effacing to the point that he has drained himself of any sense of existence. In the self-effacing solution, Horney notes "there may be . . . a one-sided focus on either intrapsychic or interpersonal factors" (237). I conclude that F's investment is in the interpersonal. His loss of the woman has led him to become "compulsive" and "destructive" (Horney 237). The desire to have friends and lovers does not have to lead to neuroses; these desires also "contain germs of healthy human attitudes" (Horney 237). We want to be with others and be liked, to be comfortable and secure not only because the world any other way frightens us but because we have a healthy "humility" and a "capacity to subordinate [ourselves] in [ourselves]" (Horney 237). Horney notes that "these qualities make the self-effacing person . . . more 'human' than many other neurotics" (237). Is this why F invokes such sympathy, however wavering, from me? Is it because through his needs, however compulsive, I

sense my own? Horney, herself, insists she is not defending the self-effacing neurotic but feels compelled to see the positive side of this neurosis (237). I add my belief that Horney senses her own, all our own, needs as well.

So, once again, I have been drawn into a Beckett drama, shown a human perspective to which I can easily relate. I do worry that even if F had her there, nothing would change. A neurotic, according to Horney, "sees others . . . in the light of his own externalizations [her emphasis]" (292). Whatever false sense of self that the neurotic has placed on himself, whatever antisocial behavior he has adopted, he externalizes onto those around him (Horney 292-3). If F's internal world, like his external world, has been neutralized, discarded, left to gather dust, would that not be the fate of any other he pulled into a relationship? Once he had magically attained his desire, would he then place her on the pallet and find someone new to invest magic in? Would she not lose her magic by being there? Would her acquisition simply represent another rung in the ladder for him to step on in search of someone who can compliment his neurotic claims, who can reassure his idealized definition of himself? Horney suggests that "as we lose the neurotic obsession with self, as we become free to grow ourselves, we also free ourselves to love and to feel concern for other people" (15-16). If F's love returns before he has achieved self-realization, while he is still neurotically awaiting



her, how can she become anything to him except a support for his own neuroses?

Such questions lose importance for me during the third scene of the play. The opening two-thirds of the scene basically repeats the action we have seen before with some variations. When F looks out the window we are also shown a view out the window. It is "night. Rain falling in dim light" (253). When F looks at the pallet, the camera moves closer for a "tighter close-up of pallet moving slowly from pillow to foot and back to pillow" (253). We are then shown a close-up of the "mirror reflecting nothing" (253) then a close-up (the first) of F's "face in mirror" (253). His "eyes close. 5 seconds. Eyes open. 5 seconds. Head bows" (253). What I see verifies what I have been feeling. F has created his own psychological night by over-investing in a false sense of self. Rain falls on his parade constantly but he does not know why. The camera can lie right down on that pallet but the lost one is not going to appear. The mirror first reflects her absence and then reflects his, his absence of thought except for his obsession, his absence of understanding, his absence of creative life. Ironically, the mirror also reflects an image he refuses to see-- himself.

The exposition is clear; the rising action is complete; I am ready for the climax. There is a "faint sound of steps" then "a faint sound of knock on door" (253). F calmly rises (I expect him to leap) and answers.

Cut to near shot of small boy full length in corridor before open door. Dressed in black oilskin with hood glistening with rain . . . Boy shakes head faintly. Face still, raised. 5 seconds. Boy shakes head again . . . Boy turns and goes. (254)

In order to make some sense of the appearance of this boy, and "make sense who may" (WW 316), I recap my previous findings. We have here, I hope we can agree, a neurotic man, F, who has created, through a lack of warmth and security, an idealized self to protect him from the harsh realities of life. This self has in turn invested itself into another person who has left. The departure of this person has, necessarily, robbed F of any real sense of existence. He is surprised when the mirror proves he is still here. F constantly thinks he hears her, looks for her, then expects her to magically appear on his pallet. To think is to be? There is no one, no one, that is, except a small boy who by emphatically shaking his head is saying, "No, she will not come." This small boy who, like the boy in Waiting for Godot, suggests that F is waiting in vain. This small boy, dripping with rain--symbolic of spring and renewal--imparts an indictment against waiting. The boy has not waited. He has launched forth, arced out, into the world, despite the dark and rain, on his mission to be all that he is. While, literally, he might be nothing but an errand boy sent by F's beloved to confirm her absence (to rain on his parade), symbolically, the boy reminds F of the real self that he left behind at some adverse juncture in

his life, a self that F needs in order, as Horney puts it, to "free [himself] to love and feel concern for other people" (15-16).

After the young boy disappears into the "empty corridor" of F's mind, F returns to his stool and his cassette; the haunting music grows louder as the camera moves in on F. Then there is "silence" (254); "F raises head. Face seen clearly for second time" (254). There is no change. The camera moves away, back to a general view of F on his stool in his dreary chamber, hunched over his cassette. Fade out. I envision the ghost trio as comprised of F, his real self, and his idealized self. I leave the trio unresolved.

. . . but the clouds . . .

Leaving a Beckett drama unresolved, whether on my part or the characters, is not unusual. I remember so many characters, Henry, Krapp, May, Winnie, who I sense are aware of the source of their distress but unable to change. With but the clouds, however, I get just a flash of change, a flash that reminds me of Croak finally glimpsing that wellhead.

In but the clouds there are three sets: one contains M sitting with his back to the camera "bowed over invisible table" (257) throughout. Another set is empty, save for a bright circle of light in which the comings and goings of M1

in various dress is shown. The third set is a close-up of W, "reduced as far as possible to eyes and Mouth" (257). M's voice outlines his life of "walk[ing] the roads since break of day" (259), returning to his rooms, changing into a robe and scullcap and disappearing to his "little sanctum" (259) to busy himself, but only in anticipation of the woman's vision coming to him. As M narrates, M1 and W appear at the appropriate times. W comes at times, mouthing words he knows, but more often he waits in vain. This is M's life.

My interpretation of but the clouds hinges on both my production and post-production experiences. After we produced the television plays, Dr. Homan, Jim Papian (co-assistant director), and I met to develop the reader-response questions. I had been formulating these as we went along and note that the first question I wrote down, because it was the foremost question on my mind, was "Who do you think the woman is?" My own first answer was that the woman was a long dead lover of M's who he recreates in an effort to deny her loss. Associating a lover's fulfillment with a return to symbiosis, I then thought of the woman as his dead mother whom he summons in order to relive the pleasures of original symbiosis. Thinking of her as a mother figure led me, however, to think in terms of W as a generic woman--a female element. I briefly mentioned Winnicott's notion of the female element of being when discussing the female voices in Eh Joe and Ghost Trio. The closer I investigated

the notion of W in but the clouds as representative of M's split-off female element, the more intrigued I became. Using Winnicott's notion of the male and female element, then, I suggest that M, who once had a fully integrated sense of self, at some point split off the female element of being and now wishes it back because without it his life has become overly repetitive, linear, mathematical in its precision, to wit--boring.

My suggestion of repetitiveness, linearity, and mathematical precision was born, to an extent, from my job during the taping of this play. The task of cuing the actors and cameras fell to me. I had to read the entire play out loud (we dubbed M's voice in later), using my hands to cue the actors when we were reaching one of their segments, counting the seconds of pauses (indicated in detail by Beckett), cuing one camera when to turn from M1's set to W's, and directing the dissolves. While engaged in the work, I became astounded by Beckett's precision and soon realized that M's language echoes the same precision often because M himself is directing the action but a concern with precision is also found in his non-action related dialogue. M is a doer and he does everything as precisely as possible. This precision fits in perfectly with my vision of him as a man who because he has no sense of existence, can only do and wraps his whole intellect around doing.

Winnicott's theory "allow[s] for both a male and a female element in boys and men and girls and women. These

elements may be split off from each other to a high degree" (79). He does apologize that although these terms are not gender specific or in any way related to the sex of a person in terms of degree, he could find no other reasonable labels to use (76).<sup>4</sup> The pure female element relates to the breast as a "subjective object," an "object not yet repudiated as a not-me [his emphasis] phenomenon" (80). This relationship "paves the way for the objective subject--that is, the idea of a self, and the feeling of real that springs from the sense of having an identity" (80). The female element, then, must be satisfied in order for the baby to develop "the sense of BEING" (80). "By contrast, the object-relating of the male element to the object pre-supposes separateness" (80). Emerging from symbiosis, "The baby allows the object the quality of being not me or separate" (80). The male element requires ego organization, as "identification . . . [is] based on complex mental mechanisms" (80); whereas, with the female element "identity requires so little mental structure that this primary identity can be a feature from very early" (80). To summarize, "The male element does while the female element is [his emphases]" (81).

For the adult, Winnicott uses Hamlet to describe a person who is suffering from a "dissociation . . . between his male and female elements" (83). When Hamlet starts his famous speech by saying "To be . . . or," Winnicott would like to hear an actor pause for quite some time before

coming up with his "rather banal alternative: ' . . . or not to be'" (83) because Winnicott sees Hamlet as a man whose "male element [is] threatening to take over his whole personality" (84). Hamlet senses this and, unconsciously, realizes there is no realistic alternative to 'to be.' The problem, however, is that his female element of being has "split off"; his rejection of Ophelia symbolizes "his ruthless rejection of his own female element" (84) and at the same time symbolizes "his reluctance to abandon" it (84). Hamlet's reluctance is clear from his ambivalence toward Ophelia. We cannot know if M's loss of the other was precipitated by a ruthless rejection on his part, but M's reluctance to live with the loss is clear from his desire for W's vision.

The voice we hear in but the clouds is M's voice, directing the doing. We see, however, two images of M (M & M1). The play opens with a shot of M but once he starts relating the action, his action, the camera dissolves to an empty set, presumably the entry room of M's house. As M describes the action, M1 enters and performs. The action starts and stops and repeats as M struggles to get it "right" (259). Whenever M stops the action, the camera dissolves from M1 or the empty set (and later from the woman) back to M on his stool. M is, to me, creating the fiction of his life for us. He is creative which fits the male element in Winnicott's theory when he notes that while creativity, in a general sense "is one of the common

denominators of men and women. In another language, however, creativity is the prerogative of women, and in yet another language it is a masculine feature" (72). He suggests that in the language of male and female elements, the male element of doing is concerned with creativity (72). M's constant creating and recreating of his own life's fiction, then, stands as my first exemplar that he is pure male element. Within M's creativity, there is a bold concern with precision. He stops M1's action when it "is not right" (259). Being right involves M1 precisely acting out/doing M's directions, including I suggest, the proper number of steps and the proper pausing, both indicated by the stage directions: "I came in--Dissolve to s[et] empty. 5 seconds. M1 in hat and greatcoat emerges from west shadow, advances five steps and stands facing east shadow. 5 seconds. Right" (259). In this way M proceeds to map out, literally, his life. I relate M's precision to doing because it is when we are doing that precision enters the picture. I sense no precision in the act of being, no need, for example, to be for 2 seconds in a defined space. My sense of being fluctuates, knows no boundaries except in the sense that it is me. M sticks to the back roads because he doesn't want to meet others. How can he, for without a sense of being, as Lichtenstein suggests, he can have no satisfactory relationships. In the daylight and during most nights, M exists only as a doer. I say during most nights because as the play opens, M begins his fiction with "when I



thought of her it was always night" (259). I am prepared, by this statement, even after his relentless recounting of his rigid existence for something different, some interruption of his routine.

Actually, M's entire fiction, because of its framing and despite the precision of his daily life, revolves around his brief moments of contact with W. During the night, every night, he wills her to appear: "I began to beg, of her, to appear, to me. Such had long been my use and wont" (260). He quickly assures me that she has actually appeared by disclaiming, "For had she never once appeared, all that time, would I have, could I have, gone on begging, all that time? (260) M then outlines three ways in which she appears: "One: she appeared and-- . . . In the same breath was gone" (260). "Two: she appeared and-- . . . Lingered" (260). "Three: she appeared and-- . . . After a moment" her lips move, "uttering inaudibly: '. . . clouds . . . but the clouds . . . of the sky' " with, in the end, M's voice speaking with W's moving lips, " 'but the clouds' " (261). If, as I am suggesting, W as the female element of being has somehow become split-off from M's personality, these words are highly appropriate. For unlike the doing that defines the rest of M's life, W speaks of clouds; she's reminding him of another side of himself by using but the clouds as if to say be like the clouds or don't forget the clouds. The clouds that we see in the sky waft, float, change shapes in much the way Holland notes our identity shifts as we

perceive it (x). Clouds cannot do or be done to by us; they simply are. I remember as a child lying on my back in the grass, looking at the clouds and finding faces, animals, namable shapes; but as soon as I found them they would begin to change, just like our sense of being changes as we see it. When W appears, she gives M back, for a few moments, that shifting sense of being. His precise, boring life dissolves into a sense of self that merely exists, that hovers, floats just out of reach. Out of reach because as he turns to her, begging her to look at him "with those unseeing eyes [he] so begged when alive to look at [him]" (260), she disappears. His sense of being, at one point alive and intact, was always somewhat unknown to him. We are all somewhat unknown to ourselves, but perhaps M had an even stronger sense that his being was poorly focused, doomed to die and fade away. It did. For M notes that there is "a fourth case" concerning W that occurs "nine hundred and ninety-nine" or "ninety-eight" (261) out of one thousand nights, when W does not appear, "when [he] begged in vain" (261). On these the vast majority of his nights, M finally wearies of begging and turns to doing: "busied myself with something else, more . . . rewarding, such as . . . such as . . . cube roots . . . or with nothing, busied myself with nothing, that MINE" (261) until daybreak when he begins his pattern again. Cube roots (mathematics), like language, are devices used, albeit creatively, by man in an attempt to order his world. I suggest that in the world of

doing, ordering is, however much an illusion, a must--a human need. The world of being, however, needs no such order. A sense of being may also be an illusion but is, in itself, protection against the chaotic external. F has the order he needs for his doing. His MINE, however, is nothing. His male element is rewarded when he works with cube roots. But his female element, the sense of self that should kick in when he is not doing, is "nothing, that MINE" (261). Hence, when M is not doing cube roots, he is faced with chaos; he lacks the sense of being to stave it off.

I am now remembering, however, that when I interpret Opener in Cascando, I move away from the interpretation that he has no sense of self because he uses I when speaking about himself. I note again that my experience with Beckett's drama has led me to interpret a total lack of a sense of self only when the character does not use I. Here I will make an exception only because M is not directly relating to us one on one or even one on many but relating through a text that he creates. Since he refers to a time when W was alive, he has experienced a sense of self in the past and, hence, is aware of his I, if only to the extent that he once had a sense of it.

W is, then, M's split-off female element. I suggest that in this sense she could be, as I earlier envisioned, a mother figure as well. Winnicott suggests that with good-enough mothering, a healthy child attains a variable amount of both the male and female element. However, with not-

good-enough mothering, mothering in which the breast is overactive and, therefore, not "satisfactory for the initial identity which needs a breast that is, not a breast that does [his emphasis]," thwarts the female element and denies the child a sense of being, leaving him or her only with the instinct (drive) produced male element of doing (81-3).

"Instead of 'being like' this baby has to 'do like,' or to be done to" (82). Thus, perhaps it is also his literal mother M refers to as not looking at him when she was alive, shifting too actively out of range before he could develop a strong sense of unity with her, a unity that must exist in order for the child to develop a sense of being.

Unlike for Joe in Eh Joe and F in Ghost Trio, I sense the possibility of change for M. I have noticed that at the end of but the clouds, W appears one last time but there is no stage direction that has her mouthing the words. I see W's still face and I hear M's voice: "'but the clouds of the sky . . . when the horizon fades . . . or a bird's sleepy cry . . . among the deepening shades . . .'" (262) He seems surer of the words. He adds language from his own memory of Yeats' text, a text that here becomes one of being, for aren't the sleepy cries of birds as unpredictable, as unmeasurable as the clouds? Is M beginning in this small way to reintegrate his female element? Is he realizing that he can regain the beauty of being, rejoin it to his rewarding sense of doing, and be a more complete individual, an individual capable of walking

the main roads? For me, this is a pleasing way to interpret the closing of this play, but I must admit that after M speaks these lines the camera dissolves from W to M, stooped over his desk, then fades out and leaves M in the dark. Perhaps that is where he will stay.

### Quad

Perhaps in the dark is where we must all stay when faced with Beckett's Quad. When we produced Quad and every time I see it, I must admit that I feel a bit nauseous, the type of nausea that I relate to vertigo. The entire play, at first, seems to me a wholesale application of the left side of Beckett's brain. Gontarski suggests, indeed, that Quad "may be Beckett's most formal work, as geometrical and symmetrical as the title suggests" (404). I have often envisioned Beckett laughing as I attempted to transform Quad into a satisfying representation of my own academic needs. I find this hard to do, for Quad seems too up in the air to pin down. Homan suggested this when he declined to offer a reading to the actors before the rehearsals. He notes, "I thought it best that all of us feel [his emphasis] our way into the work, and into an interpretation" (Filming 26). I will, then, feel my way into an interpretation of Quad. I will make few theoretical claims; however, identity theory which has become an undeniable part of my academic training will find its way into the process; I am also sure my own

way of transforming my world, despite my academic training, will also become clear.

I was not at the rehearsals for Quad; therefore, the first time I became involved in the production was in the television studio. Having read Quad several times, trying to envision it, I was eager to see Quad's reality. The cast wore brown robes with cowls, non-distinguishable at first except by their shoes and body size. There was one cast member, however, who did not want to hide her face. Homan, understanding an actor's need for a measure of freedom, allowed her to leave the cowl pushed back. I cringed. The stage directions call for "cowls hiding faces" (292). I didn't want it any other way. I scowled a bit and tugged the other cast members' cowls even lower over their faces. Unwittingly, I had fallen into the trap of Quad. As the pre-taping rehearsal began, I found myself critical of anything that individualized the performers. One actor always swung his foot out before cue; one had a jerky stop and start that drew eyes to him; one fairly smiled at the camera as she passed (cowl set away from her face); one's arm swings seemed out of sync. I was amazed at how quickly my desire to see this production became a desire to stamp out any signs of difference. I justified myself by noting that Beckett's only direction concerning difference states "each player has his particular [footstep] sound" (292). Looking back at the script, however, I found that in Quad's original version there were other differences. Originally,

Beckett asked for different lighting to be used for each actor (this was discarded as impractical), different colored robes (all white gowns were used in Quad II), and different percussion instruments to be played for each actor (also abandoned in Quad II). Although Quad II was more closely the play we were taping, I had missed something that obviously Sid had not. We were not technically able to have different lights nor financially able to have different colored costumes or hire musicians. Therefore, perhaps, allowing for physical difference among the actors, in a sense, made up for the missing technical and financial ability to produce an exact replica of this play as Beckett originally wrote it.

As the taping began, I started accepting the differences, actually allowing them to disappear into a miasma of conformity, the sense of vertigo took hold. I felt the horror of conformity that Quad holds for me. I felt the reality that the path I am on has been well worn by the feet of the people who've gone before me. As unique as I often feel my life thus far has been, I experienced an overwhelming sense of repetitive uselessness. I was born, thrust into the quad, and I will die, disappearing from the quad. In between I will plod along, following in the footsteps of those who plodded before, walking by those who are plodding with me. Left alone, like the first and last actors in Quad, I would probably do the same, feeling, however, the same "loneliness" and "hesitancy" that our

actors felt when pacing alone in the quad (Homan, Filming 28).

When we began filming the variations of Quad, on that same day, I was in no frame of mind to be of much help. I watched but absorbed little. However, when I later watched the variations, I felt a heightened sense of kinship with Sid and the actors, for the variations all involve getting into that dark square in the center of the quad. One actor steps and slowly disappears into the dark, another is seen "huddled in a fetal position, as if being birthed" (Homan, Filming 38), and finally one actor shrugs toward the audience as if to say "'I'm sorry, but can you blame me?'" (Homan, Filming 39-40), steps into the center, raises his hands "as if in supplication to some god" (Homan, Filming 40) and is faded out. We all felt a need to break the taboo of the center. In the stage directions, Beckett describes the center as "a danger zone" (293). It was, however, initially a danger zone because in Beckett's first version of Quad he had the actors crossing straight across the center of the square. The danger or problem, as he put it, was "negotiation of E [the center] without rupture of rhythm . . . . Or, if ruptures accepted, how best exploit" (293). Rather than exploit the ruptures, Beckett obviously chose to avoid the problem by having the actors create a new quad in the center, saving them from collision and exploiting the square instead. The square, provocatively darkened by a quirk of our lighting (a happy accident that Sid let stand),



has been the first aspect of the play noted by everyone I've shown it to in order to elicit their responses. All of their initial responses to the dark center leaned, like my first response and Beckett's stage direction, toward danger--the negative. My mother quickly deduced that the square was death. My father determined that the square was representative of social taboos. My students have suggested heaven, hell, a black hole, madness, suicide, a blind date, a bottomless pit, sex, an earthquake zone, just about anything that an eighteen year old finds a bit shaky. Despite these responses of fear, I keep remembering that all our variations involve getting into that dark square. Were we, the actor and directors, simply revealing dare-devil personalities or could the dark square represent a place that can be entered with impunity?

As Lichtenstein, Winnicott, and Holland all suggest, our identity develops through the realization of our separateness, our me, and our relatedness to a perceived external world, the not me. Our sense of self develops in this potential space between the me and not me, a space in which we create, in which we relate, in which we commingle with the external, but a space that is not permanently filled, a gap that cannot be closed, a space indicative of our dilemma, our need to be separate and together. This dark center, then, is the potential space between the me and not me, the tiny gap that even when we interact within it is never closed. I can never fully be another person, nor

s(he) me. There is always a dark, unknown area between us, the dark center of Beckett's quad. I enjoy this interpretation of the dark center, but I feel that any interpretation of it, including the blind date theory, is viable. Beckett has once again created a work that cannot, like life, be pinned down. My classes roared with laughter when they watched Quad until they began to worry about interpreting it, then loosened up again when they sensed how individual their interpretations could be. Quad is probably the most enigmatic work in the Beckett canon and, for me, is his purest work of art to date, his purest effort at depicting the chaos that is life and man's attempts to overcome and live with the chaos.

As I watch the actors walk their predetermined paths, I think of fate. Am I really a creature with the freedom of choice or have my choices all been predetermined? We are all alike, yes, but there's the actor with the jerky stops and starts, and one with an unusual arm swing, and one who swings his leg out first, and, of course, one who smiles at the camera. So, I like to think that despite the need for a certain conformity in our public systems and institutions, our capacity to remain an individual survives, just as Beckett's seeming quest for a characterless pattern in Quad fails because the actors cannot keep "their individual selves [from] emerg[ing]" (Homan, Filming 30). I now like to think that this inability to totally annihilate the self is the point of Quad. For me, Beckett's plays are, often,

positive statements about who we are and offer suggestions for how we can be not just how we often are and shouldn't be. I still get vertigo when I watch Quad but now I also feel delight at the manifestations of individuality that insinuate themselves into the play, despite its precise, geometrical design.

### Nacht und Träume

Far from the precision of Quad stands the dream stage of Nacht und Träume. Whenever I see the play, I think of Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams for obvious reasons. Although the developmental theories of Lichtenstein, Winnicott, and others have tended to move away from Freud's emphasis on psychosexual development, Freud's work still seems an apt place to start in my interpretation of Beckett's last television play for Freud's work with dream theory is to this day definitive. While applying Freud, I use his theoretical base, that "a dream is the fulfillment of a wish [his emphasis]" (154), a wish that was "aroused during the day" but not satisfied for external reasons, or a wish that "may have arisen during the day but been repudiated," or a wish that at some previous time (likely in childhood) has been "suppressed" (589-90). I use Freud's symbol interpretations to open avenues of exploration into A's dream, then draw in Lichtenstein's identity theory, and ultimately reach the conclusion that the dream in Nacht und

Träume represents A's wish for others, a wish that, because suppressed, finds an outlet for expression only in his dreams.

To interpret fully a dream using Freud's equation, I need to know, of course, a great deal about not only the dream but the dreamer. This is, however, a Beckett play and, I add, one in which he has reduced our knowledge of this character even more than in his previous work by restricting it to one shot of the dreamer, A, and his dream. Therefore, unlike Freud, I cannot interpret the dream work based on tidbits from the dreamer's life. I can only say that A is alone when he lowers his head onto a table to sleep and dream. Other than this, I can only look at the dream. Despite this drawback, I follow my initial feeling that there is a readily accessible wish fulfillment (Freud 549) and that the symbols within the dream suggest that the wish fulfillment, though disguised through censorship in the dream work (Freud 387), can, in one sense, be interpreted as A's wish for a response from the world that he is unable to attain during his waking hours.

The simplest interpretation of A's dream sees it as reflecting a somatic source, "stimuli derived from the interior of the body" (Freud 254). A is thirsty; he dreams of receiving a drink. He is hot; he dreams his brow is wiped. Though Freud does allow for somatic influences, he also insists that such influences are not adequate to explain any whole dream (254). Such internal or external

stimuli do not "compel [a person] to dream" (257). As verification of this, I note that before A receives the drink he has already been dreaming. Somatic sources, according to Freud, are "simultaneously present in the sleeping mind" (261) and are, therefore, used along with other "currently active material" (261); "the essential [psychical] nature of the dream is not altered by the fact of somatic material being added" (262). The dreamer uses the somatic material in such a way as to further express the psychical wish fulfillment (262). If, then, this dream only used the dreamer's thirst or heat to further its own goals, I will hazard an initial hypothesis that the dreamer, who is alone, wants company, wants nurturing, and so dreams of a hand on his head, a drink given, and on.

Freud further notes, however, that taking a dream as a whole can also be distorting to interpretation because there can be several parts, equal or not, that are all repeating the same message, not relaying a temporal cause and effect or either-or relationship (349-51). Therefore, the dream must "be cut up into pieces" (136) and each piece interpreted before finally putting them back together to achieve some type of synthesis concerning the wish fulfillment. Here my lack of knowledge about the dreamer becomes crucial for after cutting the dream into pieces, Freud would have his patient free associate to each piece. Freud's use of symbolism would then be interpreted in conjunction with the patient's conscious associations (388).

This is necessary because, as Freud writes, symbols can be highly personal and not readily interpreted using (so-called) universal meanings (387-88).

I have isolated eighteen separate segments in the dream. There is no language. The dream thoughts have been totally shifted to sensory images. Taking each movement separately, I suggest my own symbolic interpretations, at times supported by Freud, at times mirrors of more recent psychoanalytic theory. Because I cannot apply A's own reactions and history to the symbolic interpretations I offer, I adopt the dream as my own. I think Beckett invites this, for the dream in the first half of the play may belong exclusively to A because we see him on the screen but in the second half of the play, containing the same dream, the camera moves in on B, "losing A" (306), and therefore invites the audience to become the dreamer. I claim the dream.

Dream symbolism is created by the dream work, a process that takes the dream thoughts and translates them into the dream-content. When the dream thoughts contain wishes that the conscious person would normally repress, one of the ways that the dream work disguises these latent thoughts is through the use of symbols (387). In order to isolate the symbols in A's dream, I first pull the dream apart. As the play opens, we see A seated at a table (left foreground), facing the center of the stage. He hums the last seven bars of Schubert's Lied, Nacht und Träume, then sings the last

three bars, and lowers his head onto his hands. The dream image appears, raised about four feet above the stage on an "invisible podium," "well right of centre" (305). In A's dream [1] B is sitting in the same position as A, only in reversed profile, [2] a left hand appears and [3] rests on B's head; [4] B raises head and [5] hand withdraws; [6] a right hand [7] appears with cup, [8] gives B a drink, then [9] disappears. [10] The right hand returns with a cloth, wipes B's forehead and [11] disappears. [12] B raises his head, looking at an "invisible face". [13] "B raises his right hand . . . palm upward", [14] the right disembodied hand rests on B's. [15] B places his left hand on top of the "joined hands" and [16] lowers all three to the table. [17] B lowers his head onto the hands; [18] the left hand "reappears and rests gently on B's head". "Fade out dream" (305-306). We see A as before, raising his head, humming and singing Schupert's Lied, then lying his head back down. The dream repeats precisely as before except that we do not see A's sleeping form, the camera moves in and we see only a close-up of the dream.

The first image I isolate is that the dream image, B, is an exact replica of A only in reversed profile [1]. Freud notes that reversals are often found in dreams and can be interpreted as a censorship that is projecting the dream thought. In other words, I, the dreamer, am not doing or saying this, someone else is (Freud 400, 416). In this dream, however, the dream work has not created an other,

merely a reversal in position of the dreamer himself. I will suggest, then, that the dream thought is concerned with an issue of otherness within the dreamer. This dream relays a wish fulfillment of the dreamer that he consciously represses, knowing it to be a part of himself.

The second and sixth segments of the dream concern the specifically noted use of a left [2] and a right [6] hand. Wilhelm Stekel set up an interpretation of right and left symbols in dreams which Freud tentatively accepts. "According to Stekel, 'right' and 'left' in dreams have an ethical sense. 'The right-hand path always means the path of righteousness and the left-hand one that of crime'" (393). Righteousness is "marriage" but also any act viewed as good, such as "intercourse with a prostitute," according to the subject's moral standards (393). While Freud does not offer total support for these specific symbol interpretations, he also does not refute them, saying only that some of Stekel's "explanations seem neither sufficiently verified nor generally valid, though his interpretations usually appear plausible in the individual cases" (393). However, because both hands are offering comfort to the dreamer [3, 8, 10, 14, 18], I cannot see them as representing good and evil. I can, though, suggest that as good and evil are parts of the contradictory nature of man and his world, having both right and left dream hands could suggest something complete, a whole person. A's projected caretaker is whole and is the other of his wish.



Freud suggests that much of dreaming regresses us to childhood states (49). The hands and arms do reach out to B, do comfort B; I do think of the mother. As an infant the mother is for a time, during the symbiotic union, seen by the infant as pieces of a body: hands, arms, face, breast. The head touched [3, 18], the cup offered [8], and the brow wiped [11] strike me as highly nurturing acts and do suggest a dream of the mother. B raises his head [4] at the touch of the mother. When the hand disappears [11] after wiping his brow [10], B raises his head toward an invisible face [12], raises and joins hands with the other, returning them both to the table [13-16]. Perhaps he is the child awakening before the mother has returned to the room. He looks for her, reaches out for her and, magically, she appears and they join. B lowers his head [17], all needs satisfied by the mother, and sleeps. The child is comforted, secure in this the first illusion, symbiosis. I suggest the dream concerns a desire/a wish to return to the symbiotic union with the mother, a wish that Lichtenstein theorizes is harbored by all of us and coupled with our equal desire to be separate creates the dilemma of human identity, a wish that is accompanied by the reality that the nurturing hand withdraws [5, 9, 11]. Freud says that "a dream might be described as a substitute for an infantile scene modified by being transferred on to a recent experience [his emphasis]" (585). A's dream then has

regressed him to an infantile state, pre-language, but the sensory images show him to himself as he is now.

I think, however, that because of Freud's emphasis on psychosexual development and his suggestion that dreams often concern unacknowledged sexual desires (431-432), he might interpret this infantile scene as carrying erotic content. I do not, however, see the dream as Oedipal; there is no third person suggested in the dream. I will suggest that if there is sexuality at work here it is the nonprocreative sexuality that Lichtenstein suggests reaffirms a human being's existence, sexuality that is performed not to satisfy the libido but to satisfy one's sense of self (55). Indeed, Lichtenstein suggests that all psychic functions and drives are geared toward the protection and satisfaction of the core identity (333). In support of this I point to two other characters in Beckett plays who refer back to sexual experiences: Krapp in Krapp's Last Tape and Henry in Embers. In these plays, both men have withdrawn from the world, losing their relational sense of identity with others and, therefore, losing their sense of self which depends on a relatedness to the not me (Lichtenstein, Winnicott, Holland). Relating back to sexual experiences (Krapp in the punt and Henry on the beach) becomes a way to get back in touch with themselves, with that lost feeling of relatedness that is verified through sexual relations. A is alone; B is alone. A has lost touch with the world; B is A's self that remembers for him,

remembers both as child, symbiotically, and as adult, sexually, remembers the m(other), remembers that relationships can exist beside separateness, remembers that the hand withdraws. A has suppressed the need (and wish) for others from his life to such an extent that his human need to be one with an other can only be expressed in a dream, and as he sings the last bars of Schubert's Lied, he begs the dream to come again in much the same way that M begs W to return his vision of a part of himself he has lost.

A is "recover[ed] [306] by the camera at the end of the play, in effect returning the dream, temporarily mine, to the dreamer. Then the screen abruptly fades to black and I am shocked into the acceptance of both dreamer and dream as the mere screen images they are. The content of the entire play, the internal vision of dreamer and dream become mine again. My vision and hearing are now blanked out by a technological trick and yet in the dark silence I hear my own dreams beginning to surface and push for fulfillment. A's dream is our dream to the extent that we all share a need to relate out to the world and suppression of that need does not make it go away but leaves it to hover, to haunt our dreams. Yet for each of us such a dream is a "holde Träume," (305) a sweet dream.

### Notes

1. Knowing that Beckett, as Enoch Brater notes, "was appalled at the failure of directors to reproduce the images he had in mind" ("Towards" 37), we were all hesitant to alter Beckett's texts in any way. But we could not ignore our creative impulses. We filmed the variations and clearly marked them as such on the tape.

2. Dr. Homan wrote to and received permission from Beckett for our project before we began production.

3. This is the only Beckett play that calls for filming in black and white. We were unable to accommodate this direction as we were placing all of the plays on one tape. Therefore, on the video cassette before the play begins, Dr. Homan instructs the viewer to turn the color off on her set.

4. Several other terms come to mind. We could replace male and female with active and passive, a substitution often found in modern theory (and one I must admit I find strangely offensive). But the elements Winnicott is describing do not match such a substitution. The male element here could be called active, but the female element could not be called passive. It simply isn't. The female element is an active sense of being. Two other terms I thought of as replacements were projective and intrusive. Holland suggests using these to replace urethral and phallic in discussions of psychosexual developmental phases (see "Zones and Modes" in The I). But the point in the child's life when such terminology is used does not correspond to the earlier phase during which time Winnicott suggests these elements develop. It would seem we are stuck with Winnicott's language, but I suggest a minor change could possibly be acceptable. Why not simply call the female element the element of being and the male element the element of doing? Perhaps.

CONCLUSION  
"I CLOSE."

Human existence finds itself in a twilight of uncertain possibilities. Heinz Lichtenstein (18)

I am sitting surrounded by books, stamped with the names of what I have come to call the Beckett elite: Cohn, Brater, Coe, Kenner, Knowlson, Ben-Zvi, Pilling, Blau, Esslin, Homan, and more. The only possibility I seem aware of at the moment is the possibility that I will be able to summon the strength, even the courage, to put an end to these my present and first musings on Beckett. I know I will go on with Beckett. Finding his work is like finding a cache of pearl necklaces. Some of the pearls are shiny, full of light. Some are intricately matted and dark. Some are round, perfectly round. Some have shapes that defy description, convoluted in bizarre imitations of the human brain. I see Flo, Vi, and Ru silently, contentedly, holding each others' hands in a gesture of eternal friendship and unity. I hear Didi telling Gogo that he will carry him if necessary. I see May walking back and forth, unable to break her pattern, unable to reach out. I watch Krapp, fumbling as he puts on his last tape. I see Clov, standing unsure by the door. I see a woman rocking herself into her mother's madness. Mouth pleads with me, a member of a world

gone deaf, to hear her. I hear Henry begging Ada to stay and listen to him. F invites me onto his pallet. Joe tells me the best's to come. Maddy admonishes me to move on and tucks her arm in Dan's. I share Winnie's happy day and cry with an old white face over that time long past. Beckett's characters pop in and out of my life like old friends, welcome even (especially) when they have a problem. I feel a strange sense of desertion as I begin this section entitled and fittingly borrowed from Beckett: "I close."

There is no question in my mind that "discovering" Holland and through him Lichtenstein and Winnicott at approximately the same time I "discovered" Beckett altered my vision of the world. Lichtenstein's theory concerning the fragile nature of man's existence, his struggle to "maintain [a] capacity for separateness" but his inability to "exist without being embedded in patterns of relatedness" (13), has encouraged me to be more considerate of others, has led me to investigate relationships beyond the at times narrow limitations of personal concerns. Because of Lichtenstein and especially because of Holland's broadened transformation of Lichtenstein's theory into the intricacies of ARCing DEFTly, I am able to look beyond the personal concerns because I am often able, at least to a degree, to discern what these concerns are. When I know why I am reacting to the world in a specific way, it becomes easier to go beyond my own reactions and investigate the reactions of others in a much more empathetic light. Winnicott's defining of that

area between myself and others, be the others people, books, music, paintings, movies, or rocks, as a potential space names a place I have until recently seen as dark, the grey area, the danger zone between my self and the world outside. This space is now filled with light because I have accepted it as the place of creativity, the place where I can test the waters, arc out my identity and wait for a response from my world, a response which may be negative but which I can keep away from my internal self in the potential space if need be.

In my estimation, having embraced these theories, I have considered Beckett's drama in the same manner that I have considered my own identity. I have disassembled what Lichtenstein suggests are the basic signposts of identity: repetition, contradiction, and an on-going need for relationships. I have isolated characters from certain plays and attempted to interpret their identity themes, using Holland's identity equation. I have considered some plays separately in the light of not only Lichtenstein, Winnicott, and Holland but other psychoanalytic theorists whom I have determined are compatible with my primary theorists because they share a concern for the psychology of identity.

As I noted in my first chapter, there is not a Beckett play that ends without my having the feeling, at times uncomfortable, that the curtain will close and immediately reopen with a woman in her rocker or that the sound from the

radio will pause and after a second of static resound once again with barnyard noises or that the television will blink, as if to a commercial, but instead reopen to a vision of Joe again searching for lurking others. I say that sometimes this feeling is uncomfortable because I am being bombarded with my own repetitive nature. Repetition is fine when, for example, Virginia who loses Joe, her devoted husband of twenty years, to a sudden illness meets a new man who reminds her of Joe and instinctively repeats the mating dance of long age. Virginia is repeating a scenario that worked. Too often, however, as Beckett shows us, repetitiveness is a trap. We repeat ourselves not because in the past there was success but because, right or wrong, we know what to expect. So Didi and Gogo wait, May paces, Krapp listens to tapes, Joe sits alone, F sits alone, Animator interrogates Fox; the quad is filled with repetition. Repetition, so intrinsic to our lives, does sometimes help but when it doesn't, Beckett is there to remind us that in order to avoid the trap of repetition, man must change.

Man can change because intertwined amid a profusion of repetitive behavior, there is contradiction. At times all of us do or at least think something that stands in contradiction to our "normal" way of being. There are times when these contradictions can ultimately invoke change. A suggestion for possible change is at times evident in Beckett's plays. Beckett's characters, however, do not shed



their patterns on stage but they often contradict them, thus suggesting that change is possible. I think immediately of Henry who, in between repetitive fiction telling, bemoans his loneliness and knows he needs an other. May, as she rocks into her grave, still looks out the window for a blind to go up. Animator contradicts his whole sense of bureaucratic order by amending Fox's text. Protagonist raises his head and fixes the audience. He in Radio I creates a facade of artistic autonomy but behind the drawn curtains he runs to phone the doctor. Mouth screams out the contradiction of her life, not lived, as she dies. Beckett's characters do not change but we see how they would if they could. Often the change they would make would bring them out of their solipsistic states and into relatedness with an other.

Lichtenstein's theory of identity stresses our need for relationships. He states that "the identity human beings are able to create for themselves is maintained only through a specific kind of interaction with another one from whom an affirmation of the reality of existence can be obtained" (11). Such relationships not only confirm that I am but that I am not someone else.

This polarity . . . in one's experience of the other one excludes the possibility that human identity is a solipsistic state, an existence in and by oneself without an essential awareness of an otherness. (11)

It has been suggested that Beckett's vision encourages or at least reveals man's solipsistic nature. Esslin once noted

that one of Beckett's themes is "the illusion of friendship" (14), that Beckett feels "social intercourse [is] a mere illusion" (14). Coe supports Esslin when he cites some of his own suggestions for Beckettian themes: "the failure of love and friendship, the failure of communication" (18). He further notes that upon determining that "need and desire alike belong to the irrelevant outside world," Murphy is led "into a position where, in order to be free [his emphasis], he must desire nothing, need nothing whatsoever" (30). "The one advantage of a Self whose essence is the Nothing is that that Self is totally free [his emphasis]" (30-31). Murphy is free; he is dead. Beckett does show us people at times who have withdrawn from the world. These people are often creative and intellectual. But they "all are lonely" (Esslin 15). The world is not perfect, trite but true. Relationships do fail. Does that mean that we should try to live without them? When we view Krapp, we must remember that we are looking through the key hole, or as Hasla puts it, we are "privileged eavesdropper[s]" (149). The character does not know we are there. His creativity, his intellectual grasp is, as we speak, being heard only by the walls around him. He is not productive to the external world except in how we learn from peeking at him. Alone, he is just that, alone. He does not seem to be productive there either. I've never been carried away by the cleverness of Beckett's solitary characters, except in an academic or philosophic sense, because their cleverness only

dramatically brings home to me that they are not sharing, relating this cleverness to others. Yet they are, for I am in the audience. This is a paradox. What am I to make of it? I can't assume that the best way to be is to be alone, for I watch his lone characters create others. I can't assume that all of my life should revolve around others because that takes too much away from me, leaves me sitting, like the mime, waiting for a prod. What I feel I can assume is that I need to take my creativity, take my aloneness if you will, and metaphorically put it on stage six nights a week with a matinee on Sunday. Beckett shows us our own need for others, often, by showing us others who feel they have no such need. He shows us Krapp, who withdrew from the world and now sits hunched over a tape recorder listening to an other, a younger Krapp who needed the woman in the punt. He shows us Henry who has also withdrawn but who recreates the others from his past life in order to feel less alone, in order to relive an encounter on the beach with Ada. He shows us Hamm who after telling Clov to leave, obviously waits in terror that he might. M dreams up an other to pat his head, feed him, wipe his brow, affirm his otherness. Maddy plows down the road, sloughing off others, but Maddie has Dan. Flo, Vi, and Ru may not have husbands but they have each other. M, W1, and W2 have only a piercing white light and, ironically, wish they were back embroiled in a lover's triangle. Beckett's characters are often alone, often in distress but he is not saying, in my mind, that

this is how it has to be. This is how it can be; this is how it often is.

Here in this realm of how it is and whether it must be that way, I find the question of control permeating Beckett's drama. Are we controlled from without; how much do we control from within? What is the foundation for this control? Experience? Or is control a combination of experience and an innate biological factor triggered at birth as Lichtenstein suggests? According to Winnicott, external control implies internal compliance. Still I wonder if the very nature of our existence precludes the ability to control anything beyond, perhaps, our own thoughts. Surely, however, even here, in my own mind, the elements of external control reside. My language developed from my early interaction with the external; language is an external. Yet, I think, in part, with language, a language full of hidden agendas: myths, power hierarchies, social structures. Beckett's characters are all in a struggle for internal control and are usually using our external language to achieve it. Is this possible? Again, I will suggest, this paradox describes man at the "lowest common human denominator" (Cohn, Play 14). Maddy struggles to feel "alive" (ATF 61) with a "dead language" (ATF 80). Henry uses language as an other because there is no one else. At the shifting bottom of Beckett's deep dive into man, I find that because man, even alone and mired in the muck, still has his language, no matter how flawed, he continues

struggling to maintain a relationship to the external. He does so through his efforts to control his language, through his infinite creation of fictions. I suggest that Beckett has been continually testing his own ability to control his self or the other, by breaking with tradition, by shifting from one medium to another and from one genre to another. Beckett's concern with control emanates from him through his art, through Mouth's struggle to exist, to control her language, through Animator's control of Fox and the word, through Protagonist's submission and defiance. Control is the issue; a sense of self is the need.

"Human existence finds itself in the twilight of uncertain possibilities" (Lichtenstein 18). Our language is difficult, but a failure? Is communication dead or are we only discovering how fragile, how tentative it can be? Beckett's characters often make little sense, but it is not always the sense that is important. Often the mere attempt at communication, however senseless it may seem, is enough. We bridge the gap between ourselves and others, sometimes, with music. Do we know exactly what this music we are sharing means to the others? We bridge the gap between ourselves and others, sometimes, with gestures. Do we know exactly what these gestures mean to the others? So when we are bridging the gap, the potential space, with language, we cannot expect to know exactly what this language means to the others. That does not mean we should stop trying to be understood or to understand. We know that literature,

music, art, dialogue, gestures, facial expressions are all attempts to close the gap between the me and the not me, a gap that can never be closed, yes, but a gap that can often be filled with our creativity, our selves, our best. For me, Beckett, no matter how he personally feels about the world, has filled the gap between him and me with the best.

Beckett has the world in his fingertips, a world of contradiction, a world of chaos, and a world without a dialectic for eliminating the contradictions or a language to give shape to the chaos. Beckett says it himself:

'The confusion is not my invention . . . . It is all around us and our only chance now is to let it in. The only chance of renovation is to open our eyes and see the mess. It is not a mess you can make sense of.' (Driver 22)

Here Beckett reminds me of Winnicott who, when talking about the paradox inherent in human object relations, suggests

this paradox, once accepted and tolerated, has value for every human individual who is not only alive and living in this world but who is also capable of being infinitely enriched by exploitation of the cultural link with the past and with the future. (xii)

It is clear to me, then, that if we accept the mess, the paradox of living, we draw ourselves closer to our fellow human beings. Perhaps we cannot communicate with total accuracy, the mess prevents it, our unique interior prevents it, but we can try to share, as I see Beckett doing, the dilemma of human identity through our on-going efforts to reach out to others. We may wait, even though we sense that Godot is not coming, but must we wait alone? Didi does not.

Hamm does not. Maddy does not. Those of Beckett's characters who do wait alone create others with whom they imaginatively wait. This all says to me that our need to be alone and our equal need to be together, to be a related part of the external world, is the only way we at times overcome the mess. Worth suggests:

[Beckett] has looked so far into the darkness of the interior by the light of his humorous, quizzical mind, made the stage a place where the most deadly negatives--absence, darkness, death, things which are not--are transformed and transcended. (Irish 264)

I close by repeating (aptly) Hassan's view of Beckett's silences, the silences that intrude so loudly between the often senseless, often profound, voices of Henry and May and Maddy and all of Beckett's people:

The literature of silence is not without a voice; it whispers of a new life . . . . it does not merely question art but also human consciousness and the destiny of man. (201)

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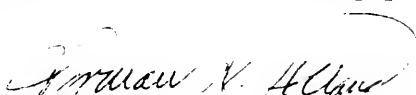
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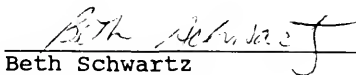
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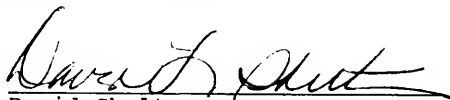
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